Chapter 7

Adolescents’ Conceptualization of Sexuality Education and Reflections on Role of Educators

7.1. Introduction

One of the primary aims of sexuality education is to address issues associated with the stage of life marked as adolescence. Adolescence is characterised by changes among the incumbents at physical and emotional level which has its manifestations the social level. This in-between stage bridging childhood and adulthood is marked by structured normative behaviour and institutionalised practices. Embedded in everyday life, these norms culturally shape the adolescents’ initiation into adulthood. Adolescents generally tend to question and deviate from socio-cultural bindings and as such their critical transformations into young adults have been perceived by society as problematic and at times threatening. Consequently, adolescents’ emerging sense of identity which includes their growing awareness towards relationships, gender roles, sexuality, their rights to age-appropriate knowledge, life skills and information in order to lead safe personal and social life are often found to be subjected to the decision of adult authorities, regulations and government policies. Abstinence-oriented sexuality education when interpreted from the perspective of the adolescents can be seen as pro-establishment extension categorising them as hormone-driven and emotional entities incapable of proper decision-making. On the other hand, comprehensive sexuality education seek to empower adolescents allowing them the space and the opportunity to discuss their attitudes and opinions regarding issues involving them and take informed decisions. If sexuality education as an institutional approach aims to emancipate the adolescents, it needs to take account of their opinions and reflections on the whole process. This chapter is devoted to what adolescents themselves think and feel so far as informal and formal sexuality education is concerned.

Thus the main objectives that will be addressed in here are, (i) to present the profile of the adolescents studied; (ii) to find the adolescents’ conceptualization of and attitude towards sexuality education and
its components; (iii) to explore adolescents’ reflections on the role of parents and teachers and to understand the problems they face; and lastly (iv) to find out ways towards effective sexuality education as suggested by adolescents. Around 200 adolescent learners belonging to ages ranging from 12 years that is reading in class eight to 19 years, reading in class twelve were engaged as respondents. Therefore, the respondents represent all the stages of adolescence such as early, middle and late adolescence. All of them filled up self-completion, semi-structured questionnaires. Around thirty four percent of the adolescent respondents (sixty eight adolescents) permitted me to conduct face to face, in-depth interviews. Some of them took part in the interview alone while others allowed me to conduct interview of their parents as well in the privacy of their residences. Both quantitative and qualitative techniques have been used to describe and analyse the data gathered. Question sets structured like Likert scale has been used understand the attitude of the adolescents towards sexuality education. The experiences and opinions of the adolescents have been categorised and organised in accordance to the content. Adolescent girls and boys have been denoted as AG-1, AG-2 and AB-1, AB-2 respectively where the number denotes their position in the SPSS data sheet.

The following chapter is divided into four sections. In section-7.2, the basic traits and behavioural profile of the sample of adolescent studied have described; section-7.3 explores adolescents understanding of sexuality education and its components; in section-7.4, adolescents’ reflections on informal and formal sexuality education and their suggestions for an effective sexuality education are analysed and in section-7.5 summery findings have been enlisted.

7.2. A Profile of the Adolescents

According to a report published in 2000 by United Nations Population Fund adolescents aged between 10 to19 years constitutes more than one-fifth of the world’s population. In India, this age group included around 21% of the total population in 2000 which increased to 23% of the total population by
2001. Though in the present study I have only been able to focus on school going adolescents\textsuperscript{34}, who are unmarried and belongs to economically stable families\textsuperscript{35}, adolescents ideally do not form a homogenous group. They include a whole gamut of categories: school and non-school going, drop-outs, sexually exploited children, working adolescents, both paid and unpaid, unmarried adolescents as also married males and females with experience of parentage. Though the stage of adolescence takes diverse characters across societies WHO defines adolescence in terms of age (10 to 19 years) and special attributes (for detail definition see Chapter 2, page ). Media and peers exert a powerful influence during adolescence. Due to all the changes adolescents undergo, they remain extremely vulnerable to alcohol and drug abuse and other risk-taking behaviour in absence of inadequate access to services and supportive environment. The support and understanding of parents during is critical for enabling adolescents to meet challenges.

An inadequate understanding of adolescent reproductive health and sexual issues is the main cause for the poor conditions of the adolescents. The following data provides some idea about the vulnerabilities surrounding adolescent population in India:

(i) It was reported by UNFPA in 2000 that as many as 26\% of females get married at 15 years of age and by the time they are 18 years, 54\% girls are married; consequently a larger share of all births is occurring to adolescent girls between the ages of 15-19 years;

(ii) Rising rate of early marriages causes high rate maternal mortality and malnutrition among female adolescents;

(iii) The widespread availability of information, the influence of the media and the breakdown of traditional family structures are causing adolescents to give into risky sexual behaviour;

\textsuperscript{34} One of the primary research question and objective of my study is to understand the status of school-based formal sexuality education; as such I interviewed school-going adolescents only.

\textsuperscript{35} The income level of the families however varied and they are categorized into different income groups.
(iv) Studies across South Asia made by Mehta in 1998 and Jeejebhoy 1996 (UNFPA 2000; 11) found that the magnitude of adolescent sexual activity has increased and is higher in boys than girls\textsuperscript{36}, that commercial sex workers usually serve as partners for first-time sexual encounters and contraceptive use is low;

(v) Around 0.7 million Medical Termination of Pregnancies among adolescents are reported in 1999-2000\textsuperscript{37} (UNFPA 2003; 69); high rate of abortion is caused due to poor access to contraception, lack of information or misinformation regarding reproduction and the high rate of rape\textsuperscript{38};

(vi) Boys (12-17 years) becoming victims of homosexual abuse and heterosexual advances by older women is also not that uncommon as a phenomenon (UNFPA 2003; 60);

(vii) With the spread of HIV/AIDS, young people between the ages of 10 and 25 years are found to make up 50% of all sexually transmitted infections;

(viii) Adolescents form the majority of drug users worldwide and in India, most drug users are between the age group of 16 to 35, with a bulk of them in the 18 to 25 years age group (UNFPA 2003; 57)\textsuperscript{39},

(ix) Trafficking of adolescent girls and young women especially from the rural, poverty-laden areas have also lead to increase in the number of young girls in brothels of the major metro cities; a survey conducted by government on the six major cities of Calcutta, Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai,

\textsuperscript{36} Though there is under-reporting of non-marital relationships by adolescent girls due to fears of social disapproval.

\textsuperscript{37} Though the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (MTP), 1972 has legalized abortion, yet the number of illegal providers of abortion services is very high. Abortions by unlicensed, untrained private practitioners in unhygienic conditions create risks of serious complications like haemorrhage and injuries and even death.

\textsuperscript{38} The incidence of adolescent rape (10-16 years) increased by 26 percent between 1991 and 1995 (UNFPA 2000; 18).

\textsuperscript{39} The established trend of abuse of alcohol, opium and cannabis is followed by the new trend of consuming drugs like heroin, hashish and LSD. Tobacco consumption and smoking in the context of adolescents is considered to be the starting point in getting initiated into other hard drugs mostly under the influence of the peer group.
Hyderabad in 1994 found that 30% of prostitutes in these cities were under the age of 20 years and around 40% of these entered the trade before they had turned 18 years (UNFPA 2003; 62).

The third National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3) conducted in 29 states in 2005-06 interviewed around 48,000 women and 25,000 men in the age group of 15 to 24 years to found that (a) only 7% of married and 9% of unmarried reported current use of modern contraceptive methods; (b) 60% are found to be anaemic; (c) one in every 10 women had sexual intercourse before age 15 years; (d) only 8% of women and 15% of men know about emergency contraception, teenagers used methods like rhythm (4%), condom (3%), and withdrawal and pill (2% each); (e) 7% of all female youth and 11% of married female youth have experienced sexual violence;(f) one-fifth of young men and 1% of young women age 15 to 24 years consume alcohol and 40% of men and 5% of female youth use tobacco in some form.

The data explored above is evidential of social context in which adolescents’ issues are embedded at present and therefore it creates the foundation on the basis of which I attempted to study the perspectives of the sample of adolescent respondents who voluntarily participated in this research. The following section examines their basic characteristics.

7.2.1. Basic Traits of the Sample of Adolescents

The present survey study is done on 208 adolescent school students residing in Kolkata and Greater Kolkata. The mean age of the adolescents is found to be 15.57 years or 16 years approximately. The standard deviation of the age distribution is 1.26 which is quite low indicating the homogenous nature of the distribution. Low standard deviation also indicate that majority of the respondents were near about 16 years of age. As such age is not taken as a determining variable while analysing data and while exploring associations between different variables.

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40 Accessed from www.rchiips.com on 29.11.13
Table 37 categorises the adolescents on the basis of their age showing the respective academic standard, the frequencies and the percentages.

Table 37: Age Categories of the Adolescents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group (in years)</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 to 13 (Early Adolescence)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 to 15 (Mid Adolescence)</td>
<td>9,10</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 19 (Late Adolescence)</td>
<td>11, 12</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>208</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: My Research

As mentioned earlier, adolescence is not a single and homogenous stage. It is divided into early, mid and late adolescence and Table 37 shows that all the stages of adolescence is represented in the sample of adolescents studied though most respondents belonged to mid- and late adolescence. The sample studied consisted of matured, experienced respondents who showed sufficient stability of opinion and attitudes and narrated situations effectively.

Other traits of the sample of adolescents such as gender division, categories based on religious and community identity and the type of school they belong too are given in the following Table 38.
Table 38: Basic Categorical Divisions of the Sample of Adolescents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>118 (57%)</td>
<td>90 (43%)</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>199 (96%)</td>
<td>9 (4%)</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>179 (86%)</td>
<td>29 (14%)</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>171 (82%)</td>
<td>17 (8%)</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Type</td>
<td>64 (31%)</td>
<td>64 (31%)</td>
<td>80 (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Board</td>
<td>114 (55%)</td>
<td>61 (29%)</td>
<td>33 (16%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: My Research

The sample includes a slightly higher percentage of female adolescents than male adolescents but it can be claimed that both the genders are well represented. So far religious and community identity is concerned; the sample is biased in the sense that adolescents belonging to non-Hindu and non-Bengali families are not well represented. The schools which the adolescents represented are also categorised. While schools belonging to all the three boards, ICSE, CBSE and WBBSE are equally represented, the same cannot be said in case of missionary, convent and Anglo-Indian schools. The table shows that most of the adolescents belonged to regular category schools that are schools with no religious or communal affiliation. The schools are also categorised on the basis of their gender dimension that is whether they were co-educational or boys’/girls’ schools. Most adolescents belonged to coeducational schools. It can be stated then that the sample of adolescents represented Bengali-Hindu community and regular-coeducation schools. Through preliminary data analysis (i) gender and (ii) boards of affiliation of the schools emerge as the two potential causal factors that can be associated with dependent factors. The association between causal and dependents factors have been explored later in this chapter in order to
explain probable relationships between social factors and respondent’s level of knowledge, behaviour, opinion and attitude.

In Table 39 details of the family background of the adolescents is given.

Table 39: Basic Details of the Families of the Adolescents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents’ Level of Education</th>
<th>Post-Graduate</th>
<th>Graduate</th>
<th>Class 12</th>
<th>Class 10</th>
<th>Lower than Class 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>75 (36%)</td>
<td>98 (47%)</td>
<td>11 (5%)</td>
<td>16 (8%)</td>
<td>8 (4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents’ Occupation</th>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Professional</th>
<th>Business</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>110 (53%)</td>
<td>34 (16%)</td>
<td>64 (31%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly Income of Family</th>
<th>&gt;55,000</th>
<th>55,000-35,000</th>
<th>34,000-15,000</th>
<th>&lt;15,000</th>
<th>Not Available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21 (10%)</td>
<td>62 (30%)</td>
<td>36 (17%)</td>
<td>30 (14%)</td>
<td>59 (28%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: My Research

Most of the adolescents hailed from educated family given that 47% parents are graduates. But I have also interviewed adolescents who are the first generation learners in their family. As the table shows, around 12% parents have read till class ten and below class ten. Occupational categories of the parents show that most of them (53%) are in service. Therefore, most of the families, around 30% fall in an average income group category. The sample also included adolescents from less privileged social and economic background; 14% of the families had annual income less than Rs 15,000. However, the economic status of the sample is incomplete because many respondents are found to be unwilling to divulge their income; in some cases adolescents are found to be unaware of how much their parents earn. On the whole, it can be stated that the sample mostly represented adolescents belonging to educated parents constituting middle income group families.
7.2.2. Behavioural Problems and Sexuality Issues Identified among Sample of Adolescents

Adolescence as a stage of life is far from being simple and safe. Research studies discussed earlier showed that on one hand the adolescents face issues such as early marriage, ill health, sexual abuse along with lack of information or misinformation and on the other hand they develop problem behaviours such as antisocial behaviour (aggressive social behaviour), smoking, drug misuse and risky sexual behaviour. According to Biglan et al (2004) normative age-related changes, historical and cultural circumstances and unique life events interacts with the genetic and biological conditions of the adolescents to influence development of problem behaviours. Elder and Caspi (1998) studying the development of problem behaviour noted that such behaviour leads to growing difficulties due to two mechanisms (Biglan et al 2004; 60). First is interactional continuity which involves the child’s negative behaviour contributing to others withdrawing their demands, thereby rewarding and perpetuating the child’s negative behaviour. Second is cumulative continuity which involves current behaviour problems contributing to the development of further problems such as in case of a child’s negative behaviour he or she is rejected by well-adjusted peers decreasing the child’s exposure to positive peer influences while increasing his or her exposure to deviant peer influences. High-risk behaviour also occurs commonly in situations where parental monitoring is absent. In other instances, researchers have observed that high-risk adolescents and their peers reinforce each other’s deviant behaviour by laughter and attention. Bullying in schools in which students tease or physically attack weaker students and the consequent victimization can also lead to the development of problem behaviours. Causal factors at the neighbourhood and community level include social disorganization, exposure to violence, low neighbourhood attachment and high rates of mobility. That is if the community is highly mobile it tends to be less coherent and less organized, with a lower level of neighbourhood attachment. This in turn increases the risk for violent outcomes for youth as neighbours are less likely to monitor neighbourhood children and apply sanction when they observe problem behaviour.
The situation of the adolescents is actually being defined by their problematic status and the negative behavioural outcomes. Therefore mere statistical data describing the sample of adolescents at hand would provide an incomplete comprehension of them. In order to ascertain the nature of the sample of adolescents being studied, it is necessary to probe and understand the problem behaviours and issues that they pointed out as significant in the course of this study. In a way this would help us to associate this sample of adolescents as a part of the universe of adolescents by linking their problems which are similar in nature in spite of being originated at diverse social contexts. As a part of this probe, it is also explored why some adolescents found it difficult or impossible to participate in this study. It also provided some insights into their subservient existence. Table 40 given below categorises the behavioural problems and sexuality issues reported by adolescents.

Table 40: Behavioural Problems and Sexuality Issues Reported by Adolescents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adolescents’ Responses</th>
<th>Frequency (Percentage)</th>
<th>Gender-Based Categorization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reported of being romantically involved and/or sexually active</td>
<td>25 (12%)</td>
<td>Female- 16 (64%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male- 9 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reported of drug or alcohol abuse</td>
<td>5 (2.4)</td>
<td>Female-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male- 5 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reported emotional stress, low concentration, depression and mental anxiety</td>
<td>22 (10.6)</td>
<td>Female- 19 (86%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male- 3 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reported experiencing sexual abuse</td>
<td>2 (0.96%)</td>
<td>Female- 2 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male- 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescents who avoided to response in this context</td>
<td>33 (15.9%)</td>
<td>Female- 21 (64%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male- 12 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescents who did not report anything</td>
<td>121 (58.2%)</td>
<td>Female- 61 (50.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male- 60 (49.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>208</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: My Research
(I) Issues Related to Sexuality and Relationships

It is found that involvement in romantic affairs and facing relationship problems thereof is a common issue among the adolescents being interviewed. These boys and girls are aware of the fact that their families will not approve of their affairs, therefore they suffer from a constant sense of anxiety, guilt and fear. According to Table 4, girls are found to be more romantically involved than boys; they are also found to be suffering more from stress, anxiety and depression for transgressing socially normative behaviour patterns. While boys attached a sense of pride with their romantic associations with girls, girls are found to be ashamed and afraid while describing their intimate affairs. Girls were also found to be in less control of their sexuality. For example, a female respondent (17 yrs) started crying out of fear and shame after she disclosed that she has been pressurized by her boyfriend to become sexually intimate and she has done so without any protection. She stated,

“Our parents know about our relationship and he often comes to my house when I am alone...this time he proposed that we have sexual intercourse...I was not sure whether to go ahead as it was not the right thing to do but my boyfriend insisted and ensured nothing will happen...it was painful so I ultimately withdrew quickly, now my period is late, doctor have prescribed medicine but it still has not started...I am so confused and afraid...is there the possibility that I am pregnant?”

She was crying out of the fear and anxiety and she also suffered from the guilt of going against her family values. All the time she blamed herself for the whole incidence. In this case, the responsibility of the whole situation actually lies with her boyfriend who knowingly instigated risky, unprotected sex showing utter absence of accountability and aggressive behaviour in manipulating my respondent to have sex. Gender inequality in a sexual relationship is evident in this case where the lack of consent of the female partner is overruled. Thus the lack of power of the female adolescents have over their body and sexuality emerge as an issue. Almost all female adolescents suffered from overbearing boyfriends. A common expression of such emotional repression and mental suffering among the girls was that they
would cut their wrist to attract attention of their boyfriends or to vent out their emotional stress. Though the activity is not life threatening it cannot be termed as normal expression of emotion as well. Sexuality issues are not single dimensional; male adolescents have also been in trouble due to behavioural discrepancies from female adolescents. AB-89 reported relationship issues when a very close female friend wanted to extend their relationship beyond friendship. He was quite distracted by her sexual advances. Since board examination was near he tried to get rid of this problem by ending all forms of communication with her but even after that he suffered emotionally because he was mentally upset about the whole incident. Male adolescents also found to suffer from confusion regarding their emerging sexuality and the social taboo surrounding it. Unlike female adolescents they have the freedom to express without being ashamed or afraid but still they are equally repressed by social norms. They vent out their frustration in questioning the system, in rebelling against the system and in finding out alternative ways for sexual gratifications. Feeling restless is also commonly cited by the male respondents. For instance, AB-10 clearly stated that he gets easily tensed nowadays, that he often quarrels with his peers, have become impatient than before and suffer from low concentration in studies. AB-206 also reported to feel frustrated and confused while trying to find answers to questions such as at what the socially approved age at which adolescents are permitted to show their interest in sex and relationships and would allow them to discuss and educate themselves about these issues. Some boys are also curious to know why the age of marriage is fixed at 21 years when most boys attain sexual maturity at sixteen years. Boys find alternative ways for gratification by watching pornography to which they become addicted. For example AB-5 reported that he has trouble in concentrating because whenever he sits to study he keeps on thinking about the stuff that he has watched in those pornographic videos. He confessed,

“Watching pornography makes me restless, it over-excites me yet I fail to control my urge to watch it”.
The following behavioural trends and characteristics of the sample of adolescents are observed are also observed.

**(II) Inability to Communicate Properly**

As seen in the Table 4, most of the adolescents did not report any issues or behavioural problem and a handful of them avoided answering personal questions. Some pretended that they have not faced any such issues or have shown any such problem behaviours as mentioned above, whereas others made it clear that they do not want to share such personal information. Those who shared their personal problems reported difficulty in openly discussing about issues related to sex, sexuality and relationships. Many stated that they felt ashamed to write about such issues even in questionnaires. During interview some adolescents are found to be quite uneasy, tensed and nervous. They perspired a lot and showed difficulty in maintaining eye contact. However, later in the course of the interview their responses were much more candid and they became much more approachable. Those adolescents, both boys and girls, who failed to maintain eye contact and always kept their eyes fixed at the floor while responding during interview reported no communication with adult caregivers regarding personal and sensitive issues. They have learned to keep things to themselves instead of sharing, especially with an adult. They were less expressive and often searched for the appropriate words while narrating their experiences. They used such expressions as “what to say?”, “how do I say it?”, “how do I describe about it?” and so on. At the same time I found some adolescents more forthcoming and more comfortable with the whole process. These adolescents unlike the previous group have been taught to share, communicate and put forward their opinions by their parents or other caregivers. It is not new to them to discuss about personal issues and this was evident in their body language; they held a more confident gaze and was much less hesitant.
(III) Absence of Autonomy

Adolescents showed various reasons for not being able to participate in the research. Some reported lack of time and too much academic pressure. They complained of having no time to think about issues related to sex, sexuality or sexuality education given that they have to attend tuitions after school hours as well as study for long hours. Their excuses are very similar to their parents as a reason for not participating in the research. They have internalised their parents’ attitude too well to distinguish their own views from them. Imitating their parents’ opinion, few adolescents stated that it is not age appropriate for them to participate in a study related to sex, sexuality and sexuality education; as if these issues are to be barred from them and are only accessible to adults. AG-175 and AG-178 declined to give interview stating that their parents would disapprove of their participation in such a study as discussing about sex and sexuality may distract them from their studies and career goal. They were not comfortable in informing their parents who, as AB-86 pointed out, are of conservative mindset. AG-106 was afraid that participating in this research may hamper her relationship with her parents. Some adolescents were only willing to participate in the study with the condition that their participation will be kept confidential. Many adolescent respondents like AG-150 participated in the research but could not allow me to involve her parents whom she described as ‘angry’ and ‘moody’ and can show negative reaction towards the whole endeavour. Others such as AG-177 informed that she does the have the required courage to participate in this study. Some others like AG-137 did not want to participate in the study because she thinks it to be improper to share personal details with completely unknown person such as the researcher. It is evident from the above responses that the adolescents bear a subservient position; they have lesser freedom to choose or to hold independent opinion. Their internalization of social norms and family values can be strong enough to submerge their natural tendencies and interests.
7.3. Adolescents’ Conceptualization of Sexuality Education and its Components

One of the main objectives of the present study is to find the adolescents’ conceptualisation of informal and formal sexuality education and its various components. The following section explores adolescents understanding and opinion of sexuality education which ideally should serve as an empowering, life enhancing initiative. Sexuality education programmes have several components within it and the study also attempts to assess the extent to which the adolescents are knowledgeable of each components. Such exploration will provide some idea about the status of the adolescents, their level of information and life skills which to some extent is determined by the nature of intervention they have experienced.

7.3.1. Adolescents’ Definition of Sexuality Education

Adolescents conceptualised and defined sexuality education both as a holistic enterprise ensuring overall wellbeing as well as a specialised problem-oriented heuristic knowledge.

(I) Sexuality Education as a Holistic Enterprise

One third of the sample of adolescents perceived sexuality education as a holistic interventional process assisting them to deal with the various representations of sex, sexuality and complexities of relationships that arises as they reach the threshold of adulthood. The following broad patterns of responses are located:

(a) Sexuality education emerges as a broad knowledge system that informs adolescents of the social regulations and makes them aware of their self, gender identity as well as their social status. It creates awareness regarding one’s own circumstances and how it is related the broader social context. It clarifies what kind of behaviour is acceptable and/or inacceptable especially those through which adolescents express their sexuality and project gender identity thereby making it possible for learners to perceive the general social status of men and women in respect of one another. For example, AG-74 stated,

“Sexuality education enables us to properly portray and present ourselves so as to be acceptable by society.”
AG-27 wrote that sexuality education partly explains how one’s gender is social constructed and it also provides an overall understanding of norms guiding sexual and gender relationships. In addition to that sexuality education is also found to explain gender based discrimination and inequality. Thus, according to AG-45 and AG-55, sexuality education makes a person gender sensitive whereby he or she learns to be tolerant to the other gender. Adolescents believed that such education can improve the social scenario so far as gender-based crime and violence such as rape, sexual molestation is concerned.

(b) Some adolescents are of the opinion that sexuality education mainly focuses on relationship skills. It fosters those life skills which enables the learners to form responsible relationships, distinguish various facets of relationship from another and take mature decisions while in relationships. Thus AB-4 stated,

“It makes young people aware of their responsibilities towards their family and friends; it teaches social skills whereby we learn to deal with people around us and it provides problem-solving skills as well.”

It is conceptualized as knowledge on various forms of inter-personal relationships with one’s family, relatives and peers and also informs about how to strengthen these bonds. The focus of sexuality education is to develop etiquette among adolescents regarding relationship and sexual behaviour.

(c) A section of learners stated that sexuality education provides an overarching understanding of the stage of adolescence and teaches them about the various changes that take place during puberty. For instance according to AB-40 sexuality education aims to provide adolescents with proper information and understanding so that they can handle the various physical and mental changes that takes place during puberty. AB-75 thinks it shows the right way to deal with adolescent issues that arises specifically with the physical and psychological changes.

(d) Many adolescents pointed out that sexuality education enable them to develop the right attitude towards sex, sexuality and relationships. It teaches them to respect other peoples’ sexuality. For
example, AG-186 pointed out that an effective sexuality education programme would instil the following senses among the learners; (i) not to mock about sexual relationship or perceive it as an object of derision and (ii) not to have a brazen approach towards anything related to sex or sexuality and (iii) be capable enough to raise voice against any kind of sexual abuse or exploitation. In other words, it ensures that adolescents learn to regard sexual relationship as a serious issue and not a frivolous activity. AB-109 and AB-103 stated in this context, 

“Sexuality education can reduce the conservative attitude of the society towards sex and relationship; we will learn to feel less guilty about expressing our ideas and fantasy related to sexual attraction.”

(II) **Sexuality Education as a Problem-specific Programme**

In contrast to the broader and holistic understanding of sexuality education, around two-third of the sample of adolescent respondents perceived sexuality education as having a restricted and limited to ‘only about sex’ focus and problem-solving orientation to strengthen the ‘risky behaviour’ discourse.

(a) Sexuality education appeared as an instructional education which aims to prepare the learners for adult sexual role performing the ‘sex-act’. It teaches about sexual intercourse that is essential for fulfilling another adult social obligation-reproduction after marriage. For instance, AG-7 stated,

“Sexuality education is a kind of study that deals with the sexual relationship between adult men and women that involves the act of biological reproduction.”

As such, according to AB-65 sexuality education is a very useful for maintaining married life. Sexuality education is believed to dispel wrong notions about sexual behaviour, desires and practices. Thus, for AB-76, sexuality education will provide correct ideas about sexual attraction. AB-81 was more insightful to state that sexuality education discusses about complicated emotions associated with sexual behaviour such as the feeling of romantic love. AB-60 held that sexuality education provides knowledge related to body, it instils right
attitude towards reproductive organs in adolescents. In a way it is suggested that sexuality education addresses the sexual awakening of adolescents and youth.

(b) Adolescents also viewed sexuality education as a set of prohibitions that promotes control of emotions and sexual abstinence among adolescents. Thus AG-1 stated,

“Sexuality education warns young people against the risk associated with love affairs and sexual relationships outside marriage.”

Similarly AG-2 stated that sexuality education makes adolescents aware of contracting sexually transferable diseases like HIV/AIDS. It also talks about prevention of various Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) such as Syphilis and Gonorrhea. For some adolescents sexuality education is an organized intervention promoting ‘safe sex’.

(c) Some adolescents simply avoided responding properly as to what they understand by the term sexuality education. They are found to believe that only adults can talk and discuss about sexuality education since it is comprised of adult contents that non-adults are not permitted to explore. They simply stated, “no idea” or “not interested in such topics”. Other adolescents refused to reply during interview stating that sexuality education is supposed to be given at a matured age and they do not consider themselves matured enough to comment about it.

(d) For few adolescents such as AG-93 and AB-134 perceived sexuality education as a body of knowledge that specifically educates young people on the physical anatomy and on the behaviour of the opposite sex. In fact many adolescents, both boys and girls, showed interest in participating in this research because they thought that they would gain insight into “how the mind of the opposite sex work” by discussing the components of sexuality education.

(III) **The Aim of Sexuality Education is Misinterpreted**

Individuals’ understanding of things and concepts is also expressed in their behaviour and attitude. The behavioural dimensions of how adolescents understood sexuality education and how they acted based on that understanding indicates a problem zone. It is found that some adolescents especially boys,
misused their communication with me that involved information and discussion related to sexuality and sexual relationship. They exploited it as a scope to carry our titillating discussion related to sex which resembled ‘sex talk’. As a researcher, I faced over-enthusiastic and curious adolescent boys who would take this opportunity to openly discuss about their sexual experiences, about others’ sexual experiences, about infatuations and would go on asking questions related to adult sexual behaviour often involving me as a female. For example, I was asked whether I have a boyfriend or whether I am married implying whether I have enough sexual experiences. I was also asked what characteristic I, as an adult female, would find sexually attractive in a man. This misuse or misinterpretation in all probability is a way of venting out repressed or frustrated feelings and emotions or is an act of uncontrolled excitement. A problem can emerge from this situation; it will make the job more difficult for the educators or the counsellors who may feel harassed or embarrassed. It may hinder the whole process of learning. If sexuality education is misused by the learners to excite themselves with ‘sex talks’, it can be regarded as obscene as pornography. Society which is already vocal against sexuality education will emphasize more on it as a negative impact of sexuality education. This issue also prove the consequences of gender socialization whereby male adolescents grow to be less inhibited about their sexuality.

Thus, only a handful of adolescents could imagine sexuality education as having a wider vision and broader scope for action. Very few could understand that life skills education is an integral part of sexuality education. In that way they resemble their caregivers; parents and teachers who also failed to understand and perceive the holistic approach of comprehensive sexuality education. In this case also everyday ‘lived’ experience of the adolescents informs the meaning they attach to sexuality education and they exhibit regulated thinking as structured dispositions. Some respondent are able to identify that sexuality education does not represents adolescence or sexual relationships as a fractional reality; rather it explains the ‘sexual’ or ‘the adolescents’ within a particular social context. Those who could not identify this broad outlook ingrained in sexuality education, mostly due to influence of socialization and internalization of popular socio-cultural notions, is bound to understand only a part of sexuality
education and conceptualise that part as the essential whole. Thus sexuality education for them became a route to talk and discuss sex, sexual act and practices; deriving pleasure or sporadic facts from it instead of empowering knowledge. Therefore they either use it or learn to use it ensure safe sex, sexual gratification or learn to avoid it or maintain abstinence following social mores.

7.3.2. Adolescents Understanding of Various Components of Sexuality Education

Sexuality education programme, as explored in previous chapter, deals with various components. Adolescents were questioned on these various components to get an idea of their level of understanding and degree of information. They were questioned on various aspects of relationships with family and friends; on understanding and expression of emotions; on love, sexual attraction and sexual relationships; on how to find help to combat any form of abuse, physical, mental and/or sexual; on child and/or early marriage; on having unprotected sex and on teenage pregnancy; on life skills such as self-awareness, communication skills and decision-making skills; on their understanding of gender roles and gender-based violence; on the influence of various form of mass media including Internet-based pornography; on reproductive health and hygiene; on puberty and issues related to the stage of adolescence. The following Table 41 categorises various components and also shows the level of knowledge the sample of adolescents have about each component.
Table 41: Level of Information Available to the Adolescents Regarding Various Learning Components of Sexuality Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Components of Sexuality Education</th>
<th>Frequency and percentage of adolescents having proper knowledge about the component (Yes)</th>
<th>Frequency and percentage of adolescents not having proper knowledge about the component (No)</th>
<th>Frequency and percentage of adolescents having some idea about the component (Have Some Idea)</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Level of Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Adolescence and Puberty</td>
<td>90 (43%)</td>
<td>23 (11%)</td>
<td>95 (46%)</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Human Reproduction</td>
<td>111 (53%)</td>
<td>17 (8%)</td>
<td>80 (39%)</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hygiene</td>
<td>29(14%)</td>
<td>27 (13%)</td>
<td>152(73%)</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Negative effects of early marriage and pregnancy</td>
<td>66(31%)</td>
<td>67(32%)</td>
<td>75(36%)</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Idea about Menstruation</td>
<td>75 (36%)</td>
<td>62 (30%)</td>
<td>71 (34%)</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>Medium-high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Idea about Nocturnal Emission</td>
<td>22 (11%)</td>
<td>125 (60%)</td>
<td>61(29%)</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Relationship Skills</td>
<td>40 (19%)</td>
<td>19 (9%)</td>
<td>149 (72%)</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Emotions</td>
<td>35 (16.8%)</td>
<td>32 (15.4%)</td>
<td>141 (67.8%)</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Sexual relationship</td>
<td>73 (35%)</td>
<td>38 (18%)</td>
<td>97 (47%)</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>Medium-high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Gender issues</td>
<td>28 (14%)</td>
<td>98 (47%)</td>
<td>82 (39%)</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>Low-Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Sexual abuse and sexual violence</td>
<td>36 (17%)</td>
<td>94 (45%)</td>
<td>78 (38%)</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Finding help to Combat Abuse</td>
<td>43 (21%)</td>
<td>46 (22%)</td>
<td>119 (57%)</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Decision-making Skills</td>
<td>32 (15%)</td>
<td>41 (20%)</td>
<td>135 (65%)</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Communication skills</td>
<td>36 (17%)</td>
<td>48 (23%)</td>
<td>124 (60%)</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Peer pressure</td>
<td>50 (24%)</td>
<td>52 (25%)</td>
<td>106 (51%)</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Unprotected sex</td>
<td>37 (18%)</td>
<td>76 (37%)</td>
<td>95 (46%)</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Pornography</td>
<td>44 (21%)</td>
<td>63 (30%)</td>
<td>101 (49%)</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Skills to Interpret Media</td>
<td>52 (25%)</td>
<td>100 (48%)</td>
<td>56 (27%)</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Self-confidence</td>
<td>32 (15%)</td>
<td>49 (24%)</td>
<td>127 (61%)</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: My Research

The Table 41 given above is analysed in the following way. In case of the first component, Adolescence and puberty, 43% of adolescents have said yes indicating they have proper understanding of the stage of adolescence and puberty. 46% have said that they have some idea about adolescence and puberty and only 11% have said that they do not have proper understanding of the stage of adolescence and puberty. Then on the whole most of the adolescents from the sample either have proper or partial
knowledge of stage of adolescence and puberty. Therefore, it can be deduced that the sample has high level of understanding and information regarding the said component. This being true for other components, following the table it can be concluded that the sample of adolescents have high level of understanding and information about the process of human reproduction and sexual intercourse.

In case of some learning components the sample has indicated a medium level of information, like in case of hygiene where 73% said they have some idea, 13% said no and only 14% said yes. In such cases it can be claimed that the sample has partial understanding and incomplete information regarding maintenance of physical, especially genital hygiene. The same is true for other components such as negative effects of early marriage and pregnancy, idea about menstruation or female reproductive health, relationship skills, emotions, gender issue, sexual abuse and violence, knowledge about how to find help in case of abuse, decision-making, communication skills, self-confidence, peer pressure, pornography and unprotected sex. It is apparent that the sample of adolescents has medium level of information about most of the learning components that are ideally addressed through a planned sexuality education programme.

In case of the remaining components where the sample of adolescents showed a low level of information such as in their idea about nocturnal emission or male reproductive health, 60% said no in comparison to 11% saying yes and 29 % saying have some idea. This indicates that the majority of the sample has almost no idea about what nocturnal emission is all about. The same is true for skills to interpret media which indicates that the majority of adolescents do not have the capability to identify the artificial and commercial elements hidden into most media-based advertisement and programmes.

The above results are found through the questionnaire survey conducted on the adolescents. However, my probing does not stop here. Adolescents have been interviewed at length to understand the extent of their knowledge about as many learning components as possible. The aim is to assemble the data gathered from the structured survey and from in-depth interviews to get an extensive knowledge about adolescents’ understanding of the various components of sexuality education. Relevant statistical
analysis is also done along with qualitative analysis of the data. Cross-tabulation between causal variables such as gender, boards of affiliation of the schools and the infrastructure of the schools and the dependents variables, in this case the information level of the sample for different learning components have been done. Two measures of association, chi-square and Cramer’s V have been used to ascertain the causal relationships and the degree of its relevance. Chi-square is a nonparametric test of significance; it makes no assumption related to population as such it can be applied in this study which has selected sample through non-probability sampling. With the help of chi-square it can be ensured whether a significant difference exists between the observed numbers of frequencies and the expected frequency under each category in the contingency table (cross-tabulation table). For all causal relationship explored, the null hypothesis will be that no significant difference exists or no association exists between the factors. The value of the chi-square (level of significance = 0.05) will help in deciding whether we reject or fail to reject null hypothesis. Cramer’s V is a measure of association for nominal-level data based on chi-square which can be used for square or non-square contingency table of any size (Elifson 1998; 393). Its value ranges from 0 when the variables are independent to 1 when they are perfectly related. All the statistical calculation has been done with the help of SPSS.

In the following sections adolescents’ information and understanding on the various learning components under sexuality education programme.

1. Knowledge and Understanding of the Stage of Adolescence

The stage of adolescence and the associated development has been variously viewed by biologist and social scientists. From biological point of view pubertal development is regarded as maturation of adult reproductive capabilities. The social scientists viewed puberty as a complex event where biological, psychological and social aspects interact with each other. The development of reproductive capacity, both in terms functions and features begins at conception. During early adolescence, the rapid and conspicuous changes in body size and appearance signal the approach of full reproductive capacity. The most visible physical changes include (i) the pubertal growth spurt and (ii) the development of
secondary sex characteristics (Dyk 1993; 36). (i) Growth spurt is experienced through rapid increase in height and weight that results in the attainment of adult size. Variability in the growth spurt is seen among adolescents coming from different socio-economic background. Adolescents belonging to families of higher socioeconomic strata grow more rapidly due to their access to nutritious food. Variability in growth is also seen in between the sexes. Girls start their growth spurt earlier than boys but when the boys start their growth spurt, they surpass the girls and end up having taller stature. (ii) The development of secondary sex characteristics accentuates the differences between the sexes. In girls the first sign of puberty is the appearance of ‘breast buds’ (thelarche) (Ibid; 38). Along with that internal sexual structures such as vagina and uterus also mature and lead to menarche (the first menstrual period). Earliest sign of pubertal changes in boys are growth in testes and scrotum, followed by penile growth and growth in height. These series of maturation leads to first ejaculation of seminal fluid or thorarche. Along with genital development, adolescents also grow pubic hair, underarm hair and facial hair. Change in voice pitch is a relatively late pubertal occurrence in males. The pitch in female voice also deepens. Adolescents also experience changes in their skin at puberty. They suffer from acne, enlarged pores and oiliness at this time. Pubertal developments also have some psychosocial effects. It is noted that girls tends to be sensitive about early pubertal development as they are the first to develop among their peers whereas boys tends to be sensitive about late pubertal development. It has also been observed that both boys and girls at a mature stage of pubertal development; (i) associate themselves more with heterosexual interactions and (ii) engage more in conflict with parents so far as interpersonal relationships are concerned.

When the sample of adolescents is interviewed on their understanding of the stage of adolescence the following broad patterns of responses are located.

(a) Adolescents showed inhibition in verbally expressing the changes they undergo during adolescence. They are informed of changes that take place during puberty from their biology school texts. They also banked on their personal experiences so far as these changes are concerned.
So it can be assumed that they are well aware of the distinctive physical changes they undergo. Yet when asked about these changes, most of them only referred to the development of asexual characteristics associated with puberty such as growth in height and growth of body hair. They mentioned changes such as growth of a moustache and the fact that boys and girls suffer from pimples. They hesitated to openly discuss about intimate, sexual changes such as initiation of menstruation, development of breasts in females, experiencing wet dreams or nocturnal emission and growth of genitalia. They deliberately avoided mentioning of these core changes associated with adolescence that leads them towards adulthood. For instance, one boy wrote in his questionnaire that girls develop breast during puberty but later he struck it out. Such hesitant attitudes of the adolescents toward the sexual and biological changes in themselves and in opposite sex are reflections of the taboo attached by adult caregivers. It is noted that the highly inhibited adolescents hardly received any form of sexuality education from parents and teachers and experienced mostly restricted and canonical communication with the adults. For instance AG-9 who has not received any instructions from her mother regarding menstrual hygiene and its necessities kept on saying that she does not like these changes at all. This shows that she is not aware of the broader implication of menstruation so far the health and well being of a woman is concerned. AB-12 is found to be aware of the emotional changes associated with puberty, but he could not clarify what emotional changes he is referring to.

(b) In contrast to the above group of adolescents, some are found to be comparatively open about the changes they undergo during adolescence. These adolescents have experienced open communication with parents regarding puberty and the associated changes. Female adolescents belonging to this group specifically mentioned the onset of menstruation during puberty, the production of specific hormones and consequent development breasts and genitals. They proved to be comparatively more aware of their growth towards adulthood. For example AG-13 mentioned clearly that as an adolescent she have experienced growth of breasts and of thick hair in the genital
area along with increase in height and weight. Some adolescent was open enough to even mention the changes they have observed in the other sex like AB-14 wrote about observing the widening of pelvis areas among same age female friends.

(c) Some adolescents are found to be judgmental about the stage of adolescence which seems to be influenced by what they have learned from their adult caregivers. For instance, AB-20 stated that one of the predominant issues with adolescents is that they can be easily manipulated to take wrong decisions.

(d) Some adolescents identified the stage of adolescence by the growing narcissistic attitude given that they become too concerned about their appearances, physique, height and weight and these effects their thinking processes as well as their behaviour.

(e) The adolescents’ understanding and knowledge about puberty may be associated with other factors. In the following section attempt has been made to associate adolescents’ knowledge about the stage of adolescence with factors such as gender and affiliation and infrastructure of their schools. The following Table 42 shows the cross tabulation between dependent variable, level of knowledge about stage of adolescence with independent variables of gender, board of affiliation of the schools and the infrastructure of the schools.

Table 42: Cross-tabulation between Independent Variables (i) Respondents’ Gender, (ii) Schools’ Board of Affiliation and (iii) Schools’ Infrastructure with Dependent Variable, Level of knowledge about Stage of Adolescence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(i) Respondents’ Gender</th>
<th>Level of Knowledge About Adolescence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes/ Have Some Idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>100 (84%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>85 (95%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Value of appropriate Measure of Association: Chi-square= 11.031 > critical value 5.991 ($\alpha$=0.05, df=2)

$H_0$ is rejected. Association exists

Cramer's $V$ = 0.230. Low Degree of Association

(ii) Schools’ Board of Affiliation | Level of Knowledge About Adolescence
In all the cases, the value of chi-square at the given level of significance (0.05) and degree of freedom (df) exceeds the critical value (following the chi-square value table given in the appendix). Therefore $H_0$ or null hypothesis is rejected. The differences that are shown in the contingency tables are significant and association exists between the variables. The following points and associations between dependent and independent variable are noted. (i) Higher percentage male adolescents (95%) are informed of the stage of adolescence compared to female adolescents (84%). Though the difference is quite less, yet a subtle gender based inequality is located. (ii) Whereas all the adolescents (100%) belonging to schools affiliated to CBSE and ICSE schools are informed of the stage of adolescence, as much as 36% of respondents belonging to schools affiliated to West Bengal board had no proper knowledge of the stage of adolescence. This shows that CBSE and ICSE boards have properly addressed the stage of adolescence creating awareness towards it through textbook contents as well as
through workshops. (iii) Respondents belonging to private schools are well informed of the stage of adolescence than those belonging to government or government-aided schools where around 73% (11%+62%) had no proper knowledge about it. This indicates that adolescents coming from lower income group or lower-middle income group families have experienced lesser degree of communication regarding attaining puberty.

From the above discussion it can be concluded that sample of adolescents have an overall high level of textual knowledge regarding the stage of adolescence but they do not properly understand the biological, social and psychological implications of this stage so far their future adult life is concerned. This explains their inhibitions which are found to be more in girls as they refused to talk about the significant changes of adolescence openly. It is also to be noted that the school can act as an important agent in inculcating right knowledge about adolescence among the learners but if the school is not supported by the board of affiliation or is lacking in necessary resources, it may not fulfil its role properly.

II. Knowledge of Reproductive Health and Awareness about Early Marriage and Pregnancy

Proper knowledge of reproductive health includes accurate information of reproductive organs of our body, their functioning and capabilities. Propagation of reproductive health creates awareness against the negative impacts of early marriage and pregnancy on health. Child marriage and early adolescence marriage is one of the social issues that India has to deal with right after she gained her independence. The mean age at marriage has been increasing steadily from 1951 onwards both for males and females. In 1951 mean age at marriage for females was 15.4 years and for males was 19.9; by 1999 it raised to 19.6 years for females and 24.5 for males (UNFPA 2003; 25). Researching on school- and college-going adolescent girls and boys in the city of Patna, Sekhar et al (2007) reported poor level of awareness regarding sexual and reproductive health matters. Larger proportions of students were not aware of the physiology of menstruation, timing of the cycle when pregnancy is most likely to occur and the role of contraception in preventing pregnancy. On correlating this finding with age and gender,
it is found that older students and boys are better informed than younger students and girls. In spite of low awareness of sexual and reproductive health, some 28% of boys and 12% of girls reported the experience of physical intimacy, and some 23% of boys and 9% of girls reported the experience of kissing, touch or sex. Almost all sexual experiences of the adolescents are found to be risky because they lacked the knowledge to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancy and infection.

In this study similar attempt was made to understand the level of knowledge the sample of adolescents has about reproductive health which includes their awareness against early marriage and pregnancy. Questions on reproductive health also explored accurate knowledge regarding menstrual hygiene in case of girls and knowledge of penile maturation and ejaculation of seminal fluid in case of boys. This occurrence referred as wet dreams or nocturnal emission is natural and essential part of reproductive maturation in adolescent boys. Following Table 6, the adolescents’ level of knowledge and information about reproductive health and awareness against early marriage and pregnancy varied from medium level to a low level. Their level of awareness against early marriage and pregnancy is medium since 36% of the respondent stated they have some idea about it, 31% said they have proper awareness regarding it and 32% stated that they are not aware of the negative impacts of early marriage and pregnancy. The level of knowledge regarding menstruation is medium–high since 36% said yes, 34% said they have some idea and 30% of adolescents said they have no idea. In contrast to knowledge about menstruation, knowledge about nocturnal emission is found to be low as 60% of adolescents stated they have no proper information about it.

The following trends can be located on analysing the adolescents experiences regarding various issues related to reproductive health.

(a) Most adolescent girls are aware of menstruation as an important physical development so far as reproductive capability of an adult woman is concerned. They know that women experiencing disturbed processes of menstruation may have trouble in giving birth. They could scientifically explain the process of menstruation through which unfertilised ova are released from the body.
(b) Many boys are found to be curious and asking questions about the menstrual cycle such as why this monthly discharge takes place. Interestingly AB-107 noted that the relevant section explaining menstrual process was not taught in biology class though it was there in the textbook.

(c) In contrast to their interest in menstruation process, the boys hardly showed any curiosity to know why nocturnal emission occurs. Some pointed out the fact that it is not included in biology textbooks from where they have learned about menstruation and other important reproductive changes. Caregiver especially parents also remains silent about the occurrence of nocturnal emission and do not communicate about it with adolescent boys. Most adolescent boys come to know about it from personal experiences and other scattered sources. Thus AB-207 read about nocturnal emission in a health related book. AB-206 came to know about it from Life Style Quiz programme held in his school. Interestingly, many adolescent boys reported that they have not experienced nocturnal emission at all. Those who experienced it found it hard to talk about it. For example, AB-73 experienced nightfall two times around the age of thirteen but he did not ask anything about it to anyone. However there are others who would not feel ashamed to talk about genital hygiene. Like AB-205 recounted his experience of hurting his genital while cleaning. He was not afraid or ashamed to inform his parents. He stated that it was really painful and there was no point in hiding about it. Moreover he also consulted his Life Style educator about genital hygiene.

(d) There are exceptions among girls (16%) who have some kind of partial idea about nocturnal emission. Thus we find AG-36 to have some idea about nocturnal emission and that it is related to physical developments among adolescent boys. However she linked it to sexual arousal in adolescent boys which may not be always true.

(e) Both adolescent boys and girls are found to be aware of the fact that child marriage or early marriages in pre-teen or teenage years have negative impacts on health, mind as well as socio-economic status of the incumbent. They are aware that the mind or the body of the adolescent or
the teenager is not ready for many things. Not only that the body of the teenage girls are not ready
for child-bearing, the respondents pointed out that the teenage mother is not mentally matured
enough to rear the child. The respondents also pointed out how an early marriage destroys the
scopes for good education and career for the victims. Thus AG-3 states,

“early marriages have negative effect on the health of the child as well because it does not get
proper nourishment”.

AG-188 pointed out that early marriage bounds the individuals to worldly duties too early for his
or her age and he or she loses freedom which is characteristic of young age. AG-183 pointed out
that a teenage mother may risk losing her life in giving birth.

(f) It is noted that adolescents are only concerned with the depreciation of female body, physical
health and life, ignoring the fact that even teenage fatherhood can negatively affect the healthy
physical and socio-economic growth among young males. For example AB-205 could not
comprehend the problems a teenage father can face because in his opinion the father has hardly any
role to play in a family other than providing for its needs whereas it is the mother who has to bear
as well as take full responsibility of the baby and the family. It is apparent that he speaks out of his
understanding of gender role and observance of less emotional association of a father with a family
compared to a mother.

(g) Adolescents’ knowledge of reproductive health as indicated by their knowledge about
menstruation and nocturnal emission and their awareness against early marriage and pregnancy is
associated factors such as gender to see if any relation between the variable exist. The following
Table 8 shows the cross-tabulation between independent variable (i) gender with dependent
variable, awareness against early marriage and pregnancy, (ii) gender with knowledge about
menstruation and (iii) gender with knowledge about nocturnal emission.
Table 43: Cross-tabulation between (i) Respondents’ Gender and Awareness against Early Marriage and Pregnancy, (ii) Respondents Gender with Knowledge about Menstruation and (iii) Respondents’ Gender with Knowledge about Nocturnal Emission.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(i) Respondents’ Gender</th>
<th>Awareness against Early Marriage and Pregnancy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes/ Have Some Idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>93 (79%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>48 (53%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Value of appropriate measure of association: Chi-square- 20.036 > critical value 5.991  
($\alpha=0.05$, df=2)  
$H_0$ is rejected. Association exists.  
Cramer’s $V=0.310$  
Moderate Degree of Association.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(ii) Respondents’ Gender</th>
<th>Knowledge about Menstruation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes/ Have Some Idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>118 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>28 (31%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Value of appropriate measure of association : Chi-square- 1.237 < critical value 5.991  
($\alpha=0.05$, df=2)  
Failed to reject $H_0$.  
Association does not exist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(iii) Respondents’ Gender</th>
<th>Knowledge about Nocturnal Emission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes/ Have Some Idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>64 (71%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Value of appropriate measure of association : Chi-square- 66.750 > critical value 5.991  
($\alpha=0.05$, df=2)  
$H_0$ is rejected. Association exist.  
Cramer’s $V=0.566$ Moderately strong Degree of Association

Following results are found in Table 43. (i) True relationship exists between gender and awareness of negative impacts of early marriage and pregnancy. Girls are found to be more aware (79%) than boys (53%) in this regards. (ii) True relationship does not exist between gender and knowledge about menstruation. In this case null hypothesis cannot be rejected because the calculated chi-square value 1.237 is less than the critical value of chi-square which is 5.991 at the given level of significance 0.05 and degree of freedom (df) being 2. Therefore the difference in the categories in this case is not
statistically significant. In spite of that, the data can be interpreted by only reading the percentage counts which shows that 100% of adolescent girls have proper knowledge about menstruation and around 69% of adolescent boys have no knowledge about it. The findings tally with what is found in the in-depth interview with the adolescents. The results are kind of obvious because adult caregivers, especially mothers are bound to give some form of education and training about menstruation so far the girls are concerned. On the other hand, going by the conservative nature of our society, adolescent boys have partial information about menstruation. (iii) True association is found among gender and knowledge of nocturnal emission. More boys (71%) have idea about it than girls (16%). However, the most significant fact is that whereas all girls have some knowledge of menstruation, 29% of boys have no knowledge of nocturnal emission and reason for its occurrence.

On the whole, the sample of adolescents have shown a medium to low level of knowledge regarding reproductive health and a medium level of awareness regarding early marriage and pregnancy. The findings highlights the patriarchal focus on female body reaching puberty (read maturation and capable of giving birth) which is socially significant as her sexuality is to be guarded more zealously so that approved patriarchal lineage can be ensured and racial purity can be maintained. The prioritizing of female reproductive processes and health can be related to the conservative approach to sexuality education where the discourse of puberty and physical hygiene was dominated by the key theme-menstruation (Jones 2011; 139). The gender bias in the propagation of knowledge regarding reproductive health victimises both female and male adolescents; boys also suffer due to lack of knowledge. The biology texts explain menstrual processes but the same focus is not found in regard to the male body, male reproductive processes and health. The knowledge therefore remains incomplete because both adolescent girls and boys remain ignorant of nocturnal emission as a significant stage in the development of male reproductive capacity just as menstruation ensures fertility in females. A similar gender bias is seen in respect to early marriage and its negative consequences where the emphasis is more on mothers’ health and status, with complete ignorance towards the damaging effects
of teenage fatherhood. This gender bias may be due to the fact that the women suffer more than the men in case of early marriage and teenage parenthood. It can also be argued that the emphasis on the female body and health and the curiosity surrounding it is a reflection of the power and dominance that the patriarchal social set up has over it.

III. Knowledge of Relationship Skills

Relationship skills refer to developed understanding of various nuances of interpersonal relationships. Such skills become especially important for adolescents as it helps to decipher the complexities of relationships especially those with opposite gender and older people; to know how to initiate and maintain stability and maintain commitment in a relationship and to understand the expectations and boundaries of a relationship. It is absolutely essential that adolescents be able to distinguish a committed, honest and rewarding relationship from an unstable, disturbing and potentially abusive relationship. Royer et al (2009) pointed out that positive romantic relationship, a normal developmental occurrence, plays vital role in various developmental domains in adolescence. Adolescents gain experiences and competencies through early romantic relationships that shape their relationships in the future. Important social and emotional competencies that are gained through early romantic relationships are communication and negotiation skills, interpersonal conflict management and emotional regulation.

Following Table 41 given earlier, 72% adolescents said that they have some idea about what constitutes a rewarding relationship or how to maintain a stable and committed relationship. This shows that the sample of adolescents has a medium level of knowledge of relationship skills. On exploring adolescents on attitudes and opinions about different nuances of romantic relationship the following patterns of responses are identified.

(a) Most adolescents could identify faithfulness, honesty, understanding and trusting behaviour and helping attitude in forming a stable and committed relationship. In this regard, AG-41 pointed out that people should understand each others’ feelings and should not try to dominate over others.
According to AG-185 an ideal relationship is one where the persons understands each others’
emotions, weaknesses and vulnerabilities as well as good qualities and on the basis of such
understanding they provide each other mutual support and guide towards proper decision-making.
For most adolescent, friendship involved trust, understanding, compatibility and a helping attitude.
For them a friend is someone with whom one can share personal matters without much hesitation.

(b) It is noted that some adolescents found it difficult to properly understand and distinguish between
relationships involving similar sets of feelings with overlapping emotions such as friendship,
infatuation, crush, love, romance and sexual attraction. They distinguish friendship from other
forms of emotional relationship on the basis that friendship does not include romance and physical
attraction. They are oblivious of the fact that friendship involves emotional compatibility and
therefore has the potentiality to develop into romantic relationship. They also showed difficulty in
distinguishing infatuations from committed relationships. Some adolescents have intimate physical
experiences such as touching and kissing with their romantic partners. It appears that their
sexuality overwhelm them too much to rationally understand any other dimensions or effects of
the relationship. For example AB -197 complained of emotional blackmail from his girlfriend. It
caused him to feel anger, stress, and agitation and consequently he was distraction from studies.
He could only partially identify the negative impacts of an unstable relationship. But at the same
time he is too engrossed with sexual imageries; he enjoys female attention and is curious to know
what girls finds attractive about boys. He was over excited to talk about his relationship and he
voluntarily described his experience of kissing being that of “completely out of the world”. Some
adolescents tried to make a distinction between infatuations and committed relationships by
associating the former with short-lived romantic affairs they observed among their peer groups and
the later with the marital bond at a matured age that they observe among their parents or other
adults. For example, AB-202 gave more emphasis on friendship so far as adolescent girls and
boys are concerned. He stated,
“We are still not matured enough to understand the complex nuances of a romantic relationship, free mixing can develop attraction but a boy or a girl can limit their relationship to a close friendship.”

He himself decided to turn down an offer to form romantic relationship that came from a girl as he decided to stick to friendship at this age. AG-100 and AG-101 are also of the opinion that dating and romantic affairs should be pursued at a mature age because such relationships need the right attitude and correct understanding of situations. Their opinions are formed on the basis of their observations of their friends suffering from heartbreaks and emotional disturbances due to romantic linkages. AB-89 thinks most of his friends who claim to be in relationship are basically obsessed with the concept of being in love. He also added,

“Having a girlfriend is a thing of pride.”

It is found that adolescents’ scepticism about romantic affairs is influenced by the opinions of their adult caregivers. AG-9 is found to be quite opinionated about premarital relationships, she states,

“It is advisable to avoid such relationships as it can lead to teenage pregnancy, people might elope or commit suicide and ruin their life influenced by overwhelming passion and emotion.”

(c) Some adolescents prioritised love and emotion over sexual attraction in a romantic relationship. For instance AB-4 states,

“In love we respect and help each other but in case of sexual attraction individuals only have pleasant time with each other, one can have sex with a prostitute but not have a relationship based on love; as such the relationship between a man and a woman should develop beyond sexual attraction and be based on mutual understanding.”
AG-185 stated more clearly that sexual relationship can occur without the presence of love and friendship between the people involved, however, where there is love and empathy for one another a more stable, healthy and committed sexual relationship can develop.

(d) Some adolescent respondents seem to avoid any discussions on emotions, love and relationships. For example AB-16 during his interview kept on repeating that he is too young to discuss these things such as love, romance and relationships. There are others who categorically informed that they do not understand what is meant by the terms ‘crush’ or ‘infatuation’. Some like AB-75, declared that they are not interested anything else other than friendship. It is evident that adolescents are aware of the social disapproval surrounding romantic liaisons. Like AG-8 stated that she is not interested in forming such relationships as she was advised against it by her parents. While they naturally feel attracted to others romantically they are also aware that their parents and teachers will not approve of it. Thus AB-15 commented,

“I found many people saying that it is not good to have romantic affairs before marriage but they do not explain why having a loving relationship with someone can have negative consequences.”

In fact while interviewing some adolescents it appeared as if they are actually totally unaware of their feelings, emotions and their surroundings. They kept themselves forcefully sheathed in moralistic behaviour and competitive attitude to protect their ‘innocence’ from so called immoral social elements. These adolescents avoided most of the questions related to relationship and love and laid great emphasis on their parents’ instructions.

(e) Few adolescents showed problem of communication within relationships. AG-92 will be an example of inferior communication skills whereby she fails to relate to her parents, teachers and friends. She prefers to keep silent when accused by elders, an act which is misinterpreted by her teachers and parents as sign of defiance. She also keeps on changing her group of friends because
she is unable to cope with most of her peers. She has high expectations from her friends and she is quite sensitive to their comments.

(f) Many adolescents agreed to the fact that at times relationships can be difficult and emotionally painful. However, it is noted that they mostly referred to emotional or romantic afflictions caused by misunderstandings or fights with their partners. They are not aware of intense antagonistic and abusive elements that can be present in an exploitative relationship. Some adolescent girls from lower-middle income group families cut their wrist to express their romantic pangs, which though not life threatening is done in the name of love. Yet they will not identify their relationship causing such abnormality in their behaviour as antagonistic.

(g) In the following Table 44 attempt has been made to associate relationship skills with causal factors.

Table 44: Cross-tabulation between (i) Respondents’ Gender and Knowledge of Relationship Skills and (ii) Schools’ Board of Affiliation and Knowledge of Relationship Skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(i) Respondents’ Gender</th>
<th>Knowledge of relationship skills</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes/ Have Some Idea</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>103 (87%)</td>
<td>15 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>86 (96%)</td>
<td>4 (4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Value of appropriate measure of association: Chi-square-6.484 > critical value 5.991 ($\alpha=0.05$, df=2)
$H_0$ is rejected.
Association exist.
Cramer’s $V$-0.177
Low Degree of Association

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School’s Board of Affiliation</th>
<th>Knowledge of relationship skills</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes/ Have Some Idea</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBSE</td>
<td>62 (97%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICSE</td>
<td>77 (96%)</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WBBSE</td>
<td>50 (78%)</td>
<td>14 (22%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Value of appropriate measure of association: Chi-square- 32.628 > critical value 9.488 ($\alpha=0.05$, df=4)
$H_0$ is rejected.
Association exist.
Cramer’s $V$-0.280
Low Degree of Association

Source: My Research
Following Table 44, true association exist between knowledge of relationship skills and gender of the respondents and their schools’ board of affiliation. It is to be noted that 96 % of boys affirmed their knowledge of relationships; they are more confident because they experience less social constrains and prohibition to explore relationships than girls whose relationship network is restricted and delimited to close circle of family and relatives. It is also regarded as the male prerogative to initiate and maintain any relationship. Students enrolled to schools affiliated to CBSE and ICSE board have discussed about inter-personal relations more than those enrolled in schools affiliated to WBBSE board. This is because CBSE board give emphasis on relationship skills as part of life skills education. School counsellors present in some ICSE board schools may have dealt with relationships on personal basis.

Thus the sample of adolescents have been exposed to the varying aspects and perplexing dimensions of relationships with peer groups and with opposite sex. They have experienced and observed the liberating feeling associated with love, they identify the pride and social recognition inherent in having a romantic partner and they have also seen and felt depressions and stress associated with unfulfilled expectations and self-centered behaviour. Most of them could identify the essential characteristics of a committed and rewarding relationship but they failed to distinguish between relationships involving overlapping emotions such friendship, infatuation, love and romance. As a result their behaviour in this context took two principal modes. Some followed the injunctions of their caregivers, abstained from forming relationship beyond friendship and became too sceptical of the idea of romance while others lose their rationality over their emotional attachments, girls more often than boys, thereby suffering from undue complications. Again, the sample showed a very low awareness towards relationships being potentially abusive and exploitative.

IV. **Knowledge of Sexuality and Sexual Relationship**

This section explores adolescents’ knowledge about various aspects of adult sexual relationship. Consequently, it also focuses on their sexuality as evident in their sexual behaviour and sexual identification. The socio-cultural environment such as peer culture shapes their sexual behaviour. Peer
culture is identified through leisure time activities of the adolescents. Factors which are part of adolescents’ micro-systems such as family, school and youth club also influences adolescents’ sexual behaviour. Following Table 41, the knowledge of the sample of adolescents regarding sexual relationship is found to be medium-high given that 35% said yes and 47% said they have some idea about it. Interviewing adolescents revealed the following nuances of adolescence sexuality.

(a) It is found that most adolescents equate sexual relation between a man and a woman with the practice of having sexual intercourse. The post-marital cohabitation of a couple seemed to be the essential embodiment of a sexual relationship. Reproduction and pregnancy seems to be only consequence or natural outcome of a sexual relationship. Adolescent respondent tend to describe human reproduction in a strictly scientific manner as learned from biology textbooks. They have restricted and limited understanding of sexual relationship and reproduction; it is bookish and mechanical as it does not reflect the diversity of human sexuality. It also ignores humane elements occurring in association with physical intimacy and sexual compatibility.

(b) Few adolescent could identify the humane elements in a sexual relationship. Like AB-45 states, “People in a sexual relationship should be mentally compatible with each other.” AG-184 add to this stating that a person enjoy being in a sexual relationship only after attaining a certain age and maturity when that person is mentally and physically capable of experiencing and sustaining that relationship in a healthy way.

(c) A handful of adolescents are found to have experienced sexual relationship. For example, AB-5 informs that he and his girlfriend usually meet at tuitions and from there they go to some private place to be together. AB-5 also acknowledges that he has kissed his girlfriend. Another respondent, AB-112 finds expression of his sexuality in flirting with girls. He does not feel guilty because he thinks flirtatious nature is characteristic of teenagers; at this age he is supposed to have fun instead of bothering about responsibilities and commitments. According
to AB 206, anything related to relationship and body is directly associated with human sexuality. He started discussing about sex and sexual relations with his peers from class nine (fourteen years of age) onwards. In lower classes, six or seven (eleven to twelve years of age) he and his friends realized their increasing interest in girls but they did not identify the attraction as ‘sexual’. According to him the sexual connotation involved in feeling attracted came later. He added,

“At present being sexually aroused on seeing a girl or masturbating while watching pornography has become a normal activity.”

(d) Few adolescents like AG-188 referred to the existence of prostitution and having sex in exchange of money as a form of adult sexual behaviour. They understand prostitution as a form of adult sexual life that is kept hidden as against the mainstream and socially accepted post-marital sexual life.

(e) Majority of the adolescents did not refer to homosexuality. According to them sexual relationship can generally take place between a man and a woman. Some of them have heard of the terms ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’ but they do not consider it a normal sexual status. Only some adolescents have experienced or have seen such relationship and they understand that society do not approve of such relationships. During the fieldwork, only one adolescent girl with homosexual tendencies can be identified. She was in a relationship with a senior from her school. She disclosed that she had never felt any attraction for boys and was quite sure about her feeling towards same sex. She is aware of the fact that her family or the society in general will never accept her feelings and same-sex relationship. Her classmates reported that she often suffer from depression and shows suicidal tendencies.

(f) Adolescents failed to acknowledge the various forms of human sexual expressions observable among adults; they hesitated to identify behaviours such as cuddling, hugging, holding hands
and kissing as sexual. For example AB-207 as well as AB-205 was not at all sure whether kissing should be regarded as a sexual behaviour or couples touching each other can be regarded as sexual. Later they acknowledge that these behaviours act as preface to actual sexual behaviour that is intercourse. AB-204 could identify touching as a sexual behaviour from his visual experiences of watching adult films but he was not sure whether he was correct.

(g) The practice of masturbation is found to be widely prevalent and accepted form of sexual behaviour among adolescent boys. Many reported that they were instigated by peers to initiate the practice. Other reported they did it first just out of curiosity. Some reported of practicing it while watching pornography that is when they are sexually aroused. AB-206 stated that he practices masturbation not out of habit or addiction but in order to satisfy himself sexually. Some boys were also curious to know whether girls also masturbate. In general most of the boys have confused idea about the biological cause and consequences of masturbation. They could relate it to sexual arousal but in most cases it seemed to be a learned behaviour, influenced and to some extent encouraged by peer group interaction. It is also approved as the dominant form of depicting masculine sexuality. Very few girls had any idea regarding what masturbation is though most of them are aware that it is a sexual behaviour carried out or practiced by only boys. As AG-145 stated that she has recently come across this term and she knows that only men do it, women cannot do it because they do not have penis.

(h) The following table associates knowledge about sexual relationship with factors such as gender and schools’ board of affiliation.
Table 45: Cross-tabulation between (i) Respondents' Gender and Knowledge of Sexual Relationship and (ii) Schools' Board of affiliation and Knowledge of Sexual Relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(i) Respondents' Gender</th>
<th>Knowledge of Sexual Relationship</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes/ Have Some Idea</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>94 (80%)</td>
<td>24 (20%)</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>76 (84%)</td>
<td>14 (16%)</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Value of appropriate measure of association: Chi-square-1.462 < critical value 5.991

\( (\alpha=0.05, df=2) \)

Failed to reject \( H_0 \).
Association do not exist.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(ii) School's Board of Affiliation</th>
<th>Knowledge of Sexual Relationship</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes/ Have Some Idea</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBSE</td>
<td>57 (89%)</td>
<td>7 (11%)</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICSE</td>
<td>77 (96%)</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WBBSE</td>
<td>36 (56%)</td>
<td>28 (44%)</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Value of appropriate measure of association: Chi-square-43.981 > critical value 9.488

\( (\alpha=0.05, df=4) \)

\( H_0 \) is rejected. Association exist.
Cramer's V=0.325
Moderate Degree of Association

Source: My Research

As per Table 45, the following points can be stated. (i) The association between gender of the respondents and their knowledge of sexual relationship is not statistically significant because the calculated chi-square value 1.462 is less than the critical value chi-square which is 5.991 at the given level of significance being 0.05 and degree of freedom (df) being 2. The percentage count shows that boys are more (84%) knowledgeable about sexual relationship than girls though the difference is quite less. (ii) Learners enrolled in ICSE and CBSE schools are better knowledgeable than those enrolled in WBBSE schools because textbook in the former schools deals with reproduction in more details than the later.

From the above discussion it can be stated that the sample of adolescents are quite knowledgeable about sexual relationship. Table 41 shows that 35 % said yes and 47% said they have some form of idea. However, interviewing the adolescents revealed that their notions of sexuality and sexual relationship are stereotypical; they confined sexual relationship and sexual behaviour to the act of
intercourse that too in the context of socially approved heterosexual marital relationship and for the purpose of continuation of the species. Many failed to locate sexuality in kissing, touching and hugging, neither can they perceive the natural humane pleasure elements in sexual relationship. The dominant heterosexual and gendered notions of sexuality is also located in adolescents’ failure to accept homosexuality as a normal tendency and their identification of practices such as sexual arousal, flirtation and masturbation as specifically masculine expressions of sexuality.

V. Knowledge about Gender Issues.

While exploring gender issues, the aim was to understand the extent to which adolescents are aware of gender socialization and consequent construction of unequal gender role characterised by discriminations in terms of opportunities and power. Though gender is primarily a socially constructed identity, Dyk (1993) pointed out the role played by physiological factors in the social construction of gender identity. It takes place through the following developmental stages; (i) the very initiation of gender identity commences at birth with the sex chromosomes being presented in every cell of the body, (ii) every foetus has the potential to develop both male and female internal sexual organ; in case of external genitalia after eight weeks the male and the female develop separate organs, (iii) in the following stage sexual differentiation takes place in brain as testosterone secretion masculinises and defeminises various cellular structure throughout brain providing male and female with different neural circuitry, (iv) at next stage gender is assigned at birth as the external genitalia initiate the social programming of gender identity as masculine or feminine, (v) the core gender identity of the child that is perception of oneself as male or female begin at the last stage. It has been seen that in most individuals their gender identity conforms to their biological sexual development. Though an adolescent is confident of his or her gender identity, during puberty changes in physical appearances and sexual responses may produce uncertainty about future. Sexuality becomes an important facet of gender. Thus according to Dyk, the increasing awareness and exploration of sexual feelings, behaviour

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41 Some anomaly in this respect is seen case of transsexuals who feels trapped inside the body of the wrong sex.
and the attempt to form sexual relationships among adolescents is their way of investigating and reinforcing their more mature gender identity.

The following broad patterns of gender sensitivity can be located so far as the adolescent respondents are concerned.

(a) Almost all the respondents identified with popular notions associated with masculinity and femininity. They could explain that these stereotypical ideas about gender behaviour and demarcated roles are socially generated and that they gain legitimacy as they are approved by dominant social institutions. Very few adolescents are found to be aware of the impacts of gender socialization and resultant inequality given that they have attended workshops on gender sensitivity organised by their schools.

(b) Majority of the adolescents conceded that in the present society men and women are equal in all respect and with time women have emerged as an equal competitor to men in all professional spheres. In this context, some adolescents vaguely pointed out that the physical disparity between man and woman give rise to gender inequality. According to them the fact that men possess more strength gives them the power to dominate over women. AG-185 went further to point out that women are biologically vulnerable as they can conceive if raped or forced to have sexual intercourse whereas nothing happens to the male perpetrators. However, she also pointed out that dearth of effective laws and their improper implementation also account for the high rate of gender-based violence.

(c) Many adolescents are found to experience gender discrimination in their everyday life. For example, AG-145 feels discriminated given that girls are not encouraged to participate in sports or take responsibilities in activities related to physical education. AB-12 finds it unfair that society in general to prefer boys to girl leading to increasing female foeticide. AG-90 could feel the burden of being a financially dependent female in a male-dominated society by observing
the sufferings and helplessness of her mother. AG-100 seems to be aware of the unwanted male
gaze. She finds it disturbing that men stares, whistles and often pass lecherous comments. The
gender based discrimination and exploitation is deeply felt in such occasion. AG-144 thinks that
the fact that the society disapproves free mixing and friendship between girls and boys itself
shows that it fails to see them as equals.

(d) In contrast to the above respondents, some adolescent boys showed rigid gendered attitudes.
For example AB-73 stated that he does not prefer women to be too independent in their
thoughts, attitudes and behaviour. AB-112 does not seem to respect girls in general since for
him girls are only for having fun in all possible ways.

(e) The following table shows the association between (i) schools’ board of affiliation and
awareness about gender issues, (ii) schools’ infrastructure and awareness about gender issues
and (iii) gender of the respondents and their awareness about gender issues.

Table 46: Cross-tabulation between (i) Schools’ Board of Affiliation and Gender Awareness, (ii) Schools’ Board of Affiliation and Gender Awareness and (iii) Respondents’ Gender and Gender Awareness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(i) Schools’ Affiliation</th>
<th>Gender Awareness</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes/ Have Some Idea</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBSE</td>
<td>59 (92%)</td>
<td>5 (8%)</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICSE</td>
<td>35 (44%)</td>
<td>45 (56%)</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WBBSE</td>
<td>16 (25%)</td>
<td>48 (75%)</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Value of appropriate measure of association: Chi-square- 63.295 > critical value 9.488

(a=0.05, df=4)
H_0 is rejected.
Association exist.
Cramer’s V=0.390
Moderate Degree of Association

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(ii) School’s Infrastructure</th>
<th>Gender Awareness</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes/ Have Some Idea</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private with high infrastructure</td>
<td>54 (83%)</td>
<td>11 (17%)</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private with medium infrastructure</td>
<td>32 (48%)</td>
<td>35 (52%)</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt. with medium infrastructure</td>
<td>20 (43%)</td>
<td>27 (57%)</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt. with low infrastructure</td>
<td>4 (14%)</td>
<td>25 (86%)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From Table 46 the following findings can be inferred. (i) Adolescents belonging to CBSE schools are more aware of gender issues than those enrolled in ICSE and WBBSE schools. It is so because CBSE schools have held workshop on gender sensitization as a part of their Life Skills Education programmes. (ii) Similarly, private schools with high-level infrastructures could impart better awareness regarding gender compared to government sponsored schools with low-level infrastructures. (iii) The gender of the respondent does not emerge as a significant determining factor so far as the awareness regarding gender issues are concerned. Though the table shows that the adolescent girls are slightly better aware than adolescent boys, the chi-square value being less than the critical the value, the difference is not statistically significant. However, it is possible that girls are more gender sensitive because they face discriminations and unequal treatment; their awareness against gender inequality can be a learned experience.

The above discussion regarding gender issues can be summed up by stating that the sample of adolescents has a medium to low level of understanding of gender issues. In Table 41, only 50% is found to have some idea about it. Majority of them have not held any detailed discussion on how social processes have become increasingly gendered and how that affects the behavioural patterns and relationships within and across gender during youth and in adulthood. Both adolescent boys and girls have commonsensical understanding of gender differences; they hardly questions or are encouraged to
question beyond what they experience. As a result some adolescents, especially boys tends to increasingly identify with the patriarchal norms of the society and girls, in spite of being aware of the discriminations in everyday life tend to accept it as a part of a given, unchanging social system.

VI. Knowledge about Peer Pressure

Peer relationship, peer influence and consequently peer pressure is a significant aspect of adolescence. Peer pressure describes a situation when peers force adolescents as member of peer group to think or behave according to certain peer-prescribed guidelines (Clasen and Brown 1985; 452). Peer group relationship is integrally linked to adolescent socialization; belonging to a peer group is necessary for healthy development of identity. But group affiliation is not simply a matter of individual choice; the group demands conformity to group norms and loyalty to other group members. Thus peer pressure emerges as the primary mechanism to transmit group norms and for ensuring group loyalty. Generally the concept of peer pressure is associated with young people’s experiences of sex, pregnancy and abortion. Maxwell and Chase (2008) argued that the timing of first sex is influenced by pressure from peers. Young men reported to be pressurised by friends, mainly through the use of ridicule but along with that there is also the need to conform to certain standards of masculinity. Thus pressure is often associated with the gender norms. Similarly, young women feel the pressure to play a relatively passive role in their sexual encounters with their partners. Keeping in mind the critical role of peer group in the growing up phase of the adolescents and their impacts on the overall attitudes of the adolescents, respondents are asked to identify peer-pressure and this led to the following findings.

(a) Adolescents could easily identify peer pressure. For example, AB-4 explained that peers often place others in situations such that they have to act or behave in a particular way. AG-7 narrated how she was ridiculed for not following what her friends asked her to do. AB-84 mentions that he first came to know about the nuances of adult sexual relationship from a senior school friend in the school bus. He added,
“I was forced to listen to the details and it was not at all pleasant experience.”

AB-88 and AB-198 experienced the same when they were forced to smoke against their will. AB-199 was pressurised to practice masturbation by some of his classmates. When he objected he was teased by those specific classmates for ‘being feminine’.

(b) Adolescents pointed out that it is difficult to say no to peers. In most cases they like to follow what their peers do, for example AB-206 and AB-205 stated that they enjoyed watching adult films together with their group of friends and did not feel any pressure or guilt. AB-205 stated,

“It is better to trick friends than to antagonize them by saying a straight no; so I generally pretended to follow them though I actually do not internalize their influence”.

(c) Some adolescents such as AB-75 could not identify peer-pressure. When it is explained to him what peer-pressure refers to, his opinion was that such issues do not occur among friends and he himself has not faced it yet. Another respondent AG-92 tries to keep up with the fashion trends in clothing following her friends and is quite sensitive about how her friends comments on her appearance and fashion senses. However, she does not identify this as a pressure to comply with certain fashion norms set up by young people. As opposed to AG-92, some adolescents tend to question the peer induced pressure to cater to a specific look, fashion or appearance. For example, AG-96 challenges the social pressure to look slim and pretty; she thinks that these particular notions of beauty are popularized by media for specific marketing strategies and therefore should not be taken seriously.

(d) Adolescents failed to identify teasing and bullying as a potentially degenerating activity capable of inflicting serious damage to the victims. For example AB-73 stated,

“In school all friends tease each other just for fun with no bad intention therefore it cannot be termed as bullying.”
Even in the few cases where adolescents can identify the negative impacts, they could not act against it effectively. Thus AB-206 confessed that teasing and bullying vulnerable peers is an enjoyable act. Though he feels that it is not proper to act as a bully but it is difficult to go against the whole class and oppose to it. Opposing it may make him the victim of such bullying act.

(e) The adjacent table shows the relationships between the gender of the respondents and their capacity to identify peer pressure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents’ Gender</th>
<th>Identifying Peer Pressure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes/ Have Some No Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>86 (73%) 32 (21%) 118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>70 (78%) 20 (22%) 90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Value of appropriate measure of association: Chi-square- 2.068 < critical value 5.991

$(\alpha=0.05, df=2)$

Failed to reject $H_0$

Association do not exist.

Source: My Research

According to Table 47 no statistically significant relationship or association exists between adolescents’ gender and their capability in identifying peer pressure as the critical value is greater than the computed value of chi-square. If the frequency percentages are followed it is obvious that equal number of male and female adolescents could identifying peer pressure; therefore gender is not acting as a determining factor.

On the whole the sample of adolescents scores a medium level value so far as their awareness regarding peer pressure is concerned. Table 41 recorded that 51% of the respondents said that they have some idea about peer pressure. Although Table 47 records high percentages of affirmative responses, in-depth interviews points out that the adolescents in spite of being aware of peer domination are
incapable of handling such situation effectively. They are afraid of antagonising peer group and at times they are not even prepared to recognise peer group norms as constraining their life and behaviour.

VII. **Awareness about Sexual Abuse and Finding Help**

The study also attempted to understand to the extent to which adolescents, both boys and girls are aware about the issue of sexual abuse and coercion. Sexual coercion can be defined as an act of forcing or attempting to force another individual through violence, threats, verbal insistence, deception, cultural expectations or economic circumstances to engage in sexual behaviour against her or his will (CREA 2005; 15). The various consequences of forced sexual intimacies include short and long term, physical, psychological and social effects. According to the working paper published by CREA\(^\text{42}\) in 2005, sexual abuse can affect academic performances of the adolescents. Psychological outcomes of sexual coercion could range from symptoms of anxiety and depression to suicidal tendencies. Communication on sexual matters is difficult in the absence of supportive environment and the inability to consult trusted adults and peers on sexual health matters in turn increases young people’s vulnerability to coercive sexual relations and sexual abuse. General indifference at the levels of community, school, law enforcement and health sector in turn inhibits proper awareness about finding help and the process of active help seeking by the victims.

The following tendencies could be located among the adolescent respondents regarding the issue of sexual abuse and finding help:

(a) Adolescent respondents seem to have no clear idea about how to identify an incident of sexual abuse. For example, AB-10 referred to child labour as a form of sexual abuse. They are even unaware of the fact that they are potentially vulnerable to sexual abuse. They could not distinguish between a ‘good’ touch and a ‘bad’ touch. Also they had no proper idea as to how to protect themselves from becoming a victim of sexual abuse or sexual coercion. Some adolescent girls

\[^{42}\text{CREA (Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action) is a non-profit organisation based in New Delhi.}\]
studying in co-education school have experienced touch from male classmates but they considered it to be merely accidental and not intentional. For example AG-39 stated she do not think the boys do it intentionally for they say sorry if they accidentally touch private parts. She may be correct in this instance, but such innocence or gullibility can prove to be fatal as she does not learn to identify and confront sexual abuse in the process. Ignoring these so called ‘accidental’ touches as not done with intention of abusing may make them victim of ignorance.

(b) Sexual abuse of adolescents boys are also reported during personal interviews. AB-206 reported of watching his friend, a boy two years his senior, being molested while travelling in a train. He described how he watched in horror as a man molested his friend and the only reason why neither his friend nor he could protest is that they were scared and overwhelmed by the circumstances.

(c) Few adolescents seem to have gathered some idea about extreme cases of sexual coercion such as rape and other forms of gender-based violence and sexual assaults from media. For example, AB-20, AG-45 describes rape as an assault that inflicts physical and mental pain on the victim. AG-45 also added that rape and sexual molestation can create depression and suicidal tendencies among the victims and in few cases it can also lead to unwanted pregnancy. AB-206 commented that rape is done by those who cannot keep their sexual desire in control.

(d) Adolescents’ reply to the question regarding how they will find help in difficult situation especially in case of abuse and assaults did not produce any significant data. Most of them indicated that they know how to find help, but during interview they failed to provide proper answers as to how and from whom they may expect to get help or who will be reliable and trustworthy enough to guide them properly in such complicated situation. The significant fact is only few of them mentioned their parents as people who can help them or from whom they will seek help. It is therefore possible that even in case of serious sexual abuse the adolescents will hesitate to open up to their parents out of shame or due to fear of being judged. Some adolescents could come up with proper answer as to how they will find help. For example, AG-45 referred to
the importance of taking legal help against any form of abuse. AB-87 stated that help may be taken from reliable and responsible adults other than parents such as school counsellor.

(e) It is also found that there is this tendency among adolescents to settle their problem by themselves privately without taking any help from parents or other adult caregivers or police. It seems more important for them to maintain secrecy than to seek proper help from reliable sources. Many adolescents replied that they will try and solve the problem first by themselves and at the most they can share and seek help from close friends. Approaching adults was the last resort.

(f) The following table explores the relation between respondents’ gender and their awareness about sexual abuse and whether the affiliation of the schools has any effect on the help-seeking behaviour of the adolescent.

Table 48: Cross-tabulation between (i) Respondents’ gender and awareness about sexual abuse and (ii) Schools’ affiliation and respondents’ knowledge about finding help

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(i) Respondents’ Gender</th>
<th>Awareness about sexual abuse</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes/ Have Some Idea</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>74 (63%)</td>
<td>44 (37%)</td>
<td>118</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40 (44%)</td>
<td>50 (56%)</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Value of appropriate measure of association: Chi-square-7.319 > critical value 5.991

(iii) Respondents’ Gender

H0 is rejected. Association exist.
Cramér’s V 0.188
Low Degree of Association

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(ii)Schools’ Affiliation</th>
<th>Knowledge about Finding Help</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes/ Have Some Idea</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBSE</td>
<td>51 (80%)</td>
<td>13 (20%)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICSE</td>
<td>70 (87%)</td>
<td>10 (13%)</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WBBSE</td>
<td>41 (64%)</td>
<td>23 (36%)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Value of appropriate measure of association: Chi-square-16.793 > critical value 9.488

(iii) Schools’ Affiliation

H0 is rejected. Association exist.
Cramér’s V 0.201
Low Degree of Association.

Source: My Research
Following Table 48 it can be deduced that; (i) statistically significant relationship exist between adolescents’ gender and their awareness about sexual abuse given that critical value of chi-square is less than the computed value implying that adolescent girls are better aware than adolescent boys so far sexual abuse or sexual coercion is concerned. It is so because caregivers are more aware of girl child abuse and potential victimization of girls than male adolescents. This another instance where we find that due to deliberate silence of patriarchal normative social system both male and female adolescents are suffering because it is evident that even male children may fall victim to sexual assault; (ii) statistically significant association exist between affiliations of the schools and the knowledge of the enrolled students regarding finding help implying that adolescents enrolled in ICSE and CBSE schools are more knowledgeable about finding help due to availability of school counsellor compared to those enrolled in WBBSE schools. However, in the both the cases the value of Cramer’s V is low signifying low degree of association.

Overall, findings show that the sample of adolescents has a medium to low level of awareness towards sexual abuse and a low level of knowledge about finding help from proper sources. In general adolescents showed a naive approach to sexual abuse. Adolescent girls are to some extent more aware than adolescent boys but it is probably not due to any planned interventions from the adult caregivers but due to the unfortunate fact that girls become victim of unwanted touch, gaze, sexual molestation, assaults and abuses more. So far as seeking help is concerned adolescents are found to be totally bend on maintaining secrecy about their personal affairs and are especially disinterested in seeking help from adults including parents. The adolescents have misplaced self confidence and reliability on peer group so far as finding help is concerned. Obviously they are completely unaware of the possible serious consequences if reliable adults or professionals are not consulted in case of sexual abuse, molestations, bullying, relationship problems or behavioural problems that can have grave consequences.
VIII. Information on Risky Sexual Behaviour, Contraceptives and Decision-making Skills

Risky sexual behaviours refer to the act of engaging in sexual intercourse without using birth control or condoms and having sex with multiple partners-practices that have been associated with increased risk of contracting AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases or unwanted pregnancy (Biglan et al 2004; 9). Since the study is regarding sexuality education, assessing the adolescents’ awareness about risky sexual behaviour becomes an essential part of the whole endeavour. Adolescents were basically questioned on whether they are aware of the notion of unprotected sex and its consequences. During the in-depth interview they are further questioned on their knowledge of contraceptive methods and their general capability of critical thinking and correct decision-making. Ideally adolescents need to develop the skill of critical decision-making so that in real life circumstances they can choose the appropriate course of action by judging and balancing the consequences of their actions.

Various research findings confirmed that adolescents and teenagers in India engage in risky sex. Jejeebhoy and Sebastian (2003) found that marriage marks the onset of sexual activity among majority of young females but this is not true for young males. In a 1999 study of low-income college students in Mumbai Abraham and Kumar reported that 26% of young men and 3% of young women experienced penetrative sex and 49% males and 13% females participated in physically intimate behaviour such as kissing and touching (Ibid; 4). The nature of premarital partnerships differs significantly between men and women. The majority of unmarried women prefers to have sex with a steady partner with marriage in mind (Brown et al 2001; 5). In contrast, sexually active young males engaged in sex with multiple partners, casual partners and commercial sex workers. Survey done by National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) and UNICEF in 2002 found that 20% to 40% of sexually active boys have experienced casual sex. Adolescent fertility rates are also high in India and approximately 107 births take place per 1,000 girls aged between 15 to 19 years. Ganatra in a study conducted in 2000 estimated that up to 10% of abortion-seekers are adolescents (Ibid; 11).
Common consequences of having unprotected, casual sex with multiple partners are unwanted pregnancies and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs). STDs comprises of a variety of diseases that are transmitted by sexual activity through exchange of bodily fluids such as semen, vaginal fluids and blood (Leukefeld and Haverkos 1993; 163). A person can get infected with STDs by having sex with an infected person. Whereas the bacterial STDs such as Syphilis, Chlamydia, Trichomoniasis and Gonorrhoea are curative, viral STDs such as genital Herpes, genital Warts, Hepatitis B and HIV can be treated but cannot be cured for life. A community-based study by Joseph, Prasad and Abraham in 2003 among 451 married women aged 16 to 22 in rural Tamil Nadu found that 18% are infected with STDs, including chlamydia, trichomoniasis and syphilis (Ibid;12). To restrict the spread of STDs ‘high-risk adolescents’ belonging to poor, minority racial and ethnic groups needs to be focused on. These adolescents generally show health problems such as chronic physical illnesses, nutrition and fitness problems, dental and oral health problems, mental health problems along with STDs and premature pregnancies. It is important that researchers recognise the interrelatedness of these adolescent problems.

In-depth interview of the adolescents pointed out towards the following trends regarding risky sexual behaviour and correct decision-making.

(a) Some adolescents are found to be aware of the risks associated with unprotected sex and about contraceptives. For example, AG-2 she states that the negative impacts of unprotected sex can be prevented by using of mechanical barriers such as Copper T which is inserted by surgical methods. Adolescents are informed that by not using a condom a person indulges in unprotected sex and as a result unwanted pregnancies may follow. AG-36 added in this context,

“The female may have to undergo illegal abortion which can lead to serious health problems in future.”
Adolescents reading in senior classes such as that of eleven and twelve (17 years to 18 years of age) know that unsafe, casual sex with multiple partners may lead to affliction of STDs; they could name few STDs such as Syphilis, Gonorrhoea and HIV.

(b) Adolescents who are in some way sexually active are found to be aware of various measures to avoid pregnancy. However, none of them are aware of the fact that even condom may not always be effective in preventing pregnancy. Even sexually experienced adolescent boys are surprised to know this fact. Some male respondents spoke of unconventional methods to avoid pregnancy. For example AB-197 stated that a man can spill out the semen during intercourse outside instead of inside the female genital. Such thought processes are generally not expected from a boy reading in class ten (14 to 15 years of age). His ideas may have resulted from his optimum exposure to pornography. It is also noted that these sexually active adolescents are not concerned about getting infected with STDs.

(c) Other groups of adolescents are found to be not very confident about the consequences of risky sexual behaviour. For instance, AG-33 stated that she is not very sure what unprotected sexual relationship refer to and what can be its consequences. Another respondent AB-89 do not believe that teenage pregnancy can happen. He stated,

“Biologically it is not possible for an adolescent or a teenage girl to conceive or become pregnant.”

Similarly some adolescents have no clear idea about sexually transmitted diseases and infections. They have only received vague and incomplete knowledge about AIDS. AG-101 have unclear idea about how STDs spread; she asked whether it can spread from sharing the same toilet seat. Also she thinks it is weird to ask somebody to test for HIV before marriage because marriage is based on trust. AB-205 did not know that HIV-AIDS can gradually lead to death. In another situation, AG-113 disclosed that she is extremely worried about skipping
period after she had sex with her boyfriend. She stated that they did not take any protection as they planned not practice full penetration during sexual intercourse. It shows that adolescents have wrong notions about the sexual act, that sex involves passion and impulsive behaviour which cannot be predicted or planned in advance. Another disturbing point that came out of this narration is that her boyfriend to some extent emotionally pressurised her to engage into such behaviour. This indicates that decision-making is a critical aspect of sexual safety, autonomy and well-being. Adolescents need to learn how to say no to unwanted pressures in actual life situations. In a similar case AG-114 stated that her boyfriend became distanced from her when she declined to be physically intimate with him. This led to emotional and mental torment as she often regrets her decision of declining her boyfriend. This indicated that adolescents are susceptible to emotional blackmail in intimate relationships for which they need to learn critical and logical thinking so that they do not regret their decisions of avoiding unsafe sex at the cost of momentary happiness.

(d) So far decision-making is concerned majority of the adolescents think that they are capable of taking their own decisions especially if it is associated with his or her life. For example AG-183 states that she will choose her life partner and she is confident that her decision will be correct. According to AB-107 correct decision making needs logical reasoning and one also need to trust one’s inner conscience. Although adolescents acknowledge the fact that parent and teachers provide them proper guidance, in the end, they would like to take the final decision. They are somewhat displeased that in reality most of the decisions are either taken by their parents or influenced by them. Such areas of contention include career choices as well as whom to choose as friends or whether to have relationships. Some adolescents think that their friends are capable of guiding them correctly to take the right decision. Few adolescents showed no confidence in taking the right decision. Like AG-144 confessed that she is prone to take wrong
decisions. AB-207 stated that he is easily diverted by various ideas while thinking about possible consequences which make the decision-making process quite difficult.

(e) The following table explores the association between the respondents’ gender and the awareness about risky sexual activities and that between affiliation of the schools to which the respondents are enrolled and the capability for correct decision-making.

Table 49: Cross-tabulation between (i) Respondents’ Gender and Awareness about Risky Sexual Behaviour and (ii) Schools’ Affiliation and Capability of Decision-making

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(i) Respondents’ Gender</th>
<th>Awareness about Unprotected Sex</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes/ Have Some Idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>72 (61%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>60 (67%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Value of appropriate measure of association: Chi-square 7.815 > critical value 5.991

\[ (\alpha=0.05, df=2) \]

\[ H_0 \] is rejected

Association exists.

Cramer’s V 0.194

Low degree of Association

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(ii) School’s Board of Affiliation</th>
<th>Knowledge about Decision-making</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes/ Have Some Idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBSE</td>
<td>53 (83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICSE</td>
<td>69 (86%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WBBSE</td>
<td>45 (70%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Value of appropriate measure of association: Chi-square 12.536 > critical value 9.488

\[ (\alpha=0.05, df=4) \]

\[ H_0 \] is rejected.

Association exists.

Cramer’s V 0.174

Low degree of Association

Source: My Research

In both the cases the association between the variables exist as the critical value of chi-square is greater than the computed value of chi-square. Thus it is found that (i) male adolescents are more aware of risky sexual behaviour than female adolescents though the difference (in percentage) is not much; the degree of association is also low; (ii) respondents enrolled in ICSE and CBSE affiliated schools seem to be better capable of taking right decision-making process than those enrolled in WBBSE schools; here again the degree of association is low. Male adolescents are better aware of risky sexual behaviour than females because they are more
sexually inclined or tend to be more sexually active. Adolescents enrolled in CBSE schools have better opportunities to learn decision-making skills as it is included in Life Skills programmes. Those reading in ICSE schools mostly belong to educated, high-income group families and might have been explored decision-making process as a part of family-based socialization and upbringing. In comparison adolescents from WBBSE schools belonged to low-income group families with less educated parents (education level below class ten) where opportunities for decision-making is quite less.

In Table 49, higher percentages of adolescents affirmed their knowledge of risky sexual behaviour and decision-making. Yet as one explores the interview data it is obvious that their knowledge regarding casual sex, spread of STDs and preventive measures are faulty and incomplete and therefore unreliable. Their decision-making skills have not developed properly. They attach too much importance to personal freedom to achieve enough clarity and rationality needed for critical reasoning that could have enabled them to take the right decision in complicated situations involving intimate relationships.

IX. **Knowledge and Skills of how to Interpret Media**

Mass media is a highly influential medium which is constantly transmitting about sex and relationships. Adolescents are constantly exposed to different forms of media. They absorb most of the information and messages present in media almost unquestioningly and in a passive way. Their ideas regarding body, sexuality, relationships, emotions, behavioural ethics and communication patterns are shaped by messages received from media. It is therefore an essential part of sexuality education programme as well as life skills education initiatives to enable adolescent learners to interpret information and messages received through media skilfully, engaging logic and critical thinking. They need to attain the capability of identify the falsities and advertisement gimmicks hidden in media. The sample of adolescents studied in this research are questioned on overall understanding of media, on the extent to which it influences them and whether they can identify the unreal elements within it.
The following patterns of responses were noted on analysing the interview data.

(a) Some adolescents stated that media lays too much emphasis on physical appearances whereas in real life looks do not matter so much. In this context, AG-188 stated that she found no connection between what is shown in films and popular cinemas and real life. AB-18 reported that he learned to critically assess advertisements in life skills classes; he can understand that the ideas propagated by media may not be always accurate.

(b) However adolescents mostly accepted and absorbed unquestioningly whatever they experience from media such as the popular and dominant notions on appearances and looks. Media generally highlights the popularity and demand of fair skin and slim figure for girls and good height and physique for boys. Most male respondents replied that they want to be tall. For example, AB-206 pointed out it is important to gain good height because as a boy he needs to be taller than girls, adding that if he has a girlfriend in future he would definitely want to be taller than her because that is popular notion. One can identify the definite gendered messages being transferred to the adolescents through advertisements.

(c) Internet is also highly accessed by adolescents; it is obvious that they gather all forms of information from Internet. A significant number of adolescents find Internet pornography to be highly educative about adult sexual behaviour. They also found pornographic films realistic. Some adolescents are able to understand that pornographic materials are meant for entertainment and that they aim to titillate the viewers more than providing them scientifically accurate information. In this context, AB-73 stated,

“Girls in real life do not look like porn-stars shown in adult films; the anatomical features shown in such films seem to be artificially enhanced as their shapes and size does not appear realistic.”
(d) In the following table the association between the level of awareness of the adolescents regarding the artificial elements of media and the affiliation and infrastructure of the schools they are enrolled in have been explored.

Table 50: Cross-tabulation between (i) Schools’ Affiliation with Respondents’ Awareness about Media Artificiality and (ii) Schools’ Infrastructure with Respondents’ Awareness about Media Artificiality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(i)School’s Board of Affiliation</th>
<th>Awareness about Media Artificiality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes/ Have Some Idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBSE</td>
<td>48 (75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICSE</td>
<td>45 (56%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WBBSE</td>
<td>15 (23%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Value of appropriate measure of association: Chi-square- 49.689 > critical value 9.488
\( (\alpha=0.05, \text{df}=4) \)

\( H_0 \) is rejected.

Association exist.

Cramer’s V=0.346

Moderate Degree of Association

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(ii)School’s Infrastructure</th>
<th>Awareness about Media Artificiality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes/ Have Some Idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private with high infrastructure</td>
<td>54 (83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private with medium infrastructure</td>
<td>36 (54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt. with medium infrastructure</td>
<td>12 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt. with low infrastructure</td>
<td>6 (21%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Value of appropriate measure of association: Chi-square-52.641 > critical value 12.592
\( (\alpha=0.05, \text{df}=6) \)

\( H_0 \) is rejected.

Association exist.

Cramer’s V=0.356

Moderate Degree of Association

Source: My research

According to Table 50, the differences created in the respondents’ level of awareness towards media artificiality is determined by the intervening variable, schools’ affiliation and infrastructure and the difference is statistically significant. Therefore it can be stated that (i) adolescents enrolled in schools affiliated to CBSE board are more skilled at interpreting media messages logically by overlooking the unreal elements than those enrolled in schools affiliated to ICSE and WBBSE schools and (ii) adolescents in better resourced schools with high infrastructure also seemed to be more aware of media gimmicks than those in low infrastructure government and government-aided schools. Life skills education programme found in CBSE schools addressed media skills which explain the fact that higher
percentages of adolescents from these schools were confident about dealing with explicit messages from media.

On the whole however, the sample of adolescents showed a low-level of awareness towards media. Table 41 shows that around 48% of the respondents did not know how to interpret media and Table 15 shows that high percentages of adolescents from WBBSE board, government sponsored schools also said to have not learned to skilfully deal with media messages. Interview data also showed that majority of adolescents take recourse to Internet for information they could not get from other sources and that they find this information realistic and reliable. Their conception of self and others are shaped by explicit media contents and their needs are defined by advertisements and they are yet to question these ideas or learn dislodge them logically.

X. Statistical Representation of Adolescents’ Attitude and Awareness

In the above sections, a detailed and in-depth analysis of adolescents’ understanding and awareness about sexuality education and its components have been discussed. However, since the study is essentially a survey it is methodologically implied that a comprehensive yet concise data representing adolescents’ attitude and awareness towards the basic characteristics and essential aims of sexuality education needs to be provided. Keeping this aim in mind, a set of fourteen questions with seven negative statements and seven positive statements about sexuality education following the format of the five-point Likert scale was included in the questionnaires. In the following Table 16 and 17, the analysis of the data retrieved from administering the Likert scale is given.
Table 51: Adolescents Attitudes towards Negative Statements on Sexuality Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Statements</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. It is dangerous</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5 (2.4%)</td>
<td>50 (24%)</td>
<td>81(38.9%)</td>
<td>F: 45 (56%) M: 36 (44%)</td>
<td>72 (34.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. It is not suitable</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td>13 (6.2%)</td>
<td>57 (27.4%)</td>
<td>81(38.9%)</td>
<td>F: 44 (54%) M: 37 (46%)</td>
<td>55 (26.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. It can instigate love affairs/ sexual relationships</td>
<td>4 (1.9%)</td>
<td>22 (10.6%)</td>
<td>74 (35.6%)</td>
<td>F: 46(62%) M: 28(38%)</td>
<td>62(29.8%)</td>
<td>46 (22.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. It can hamper academic performance</td>
<td>3 (1.4%)</td>
<td>21 (10.1%)</td>
<td>45 (21.6%)</td>
<td>76(36.5%)</td>
<td>F: 48 (63%) M: 28(37%)</td>
<td>63 (30.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. It should not be part of school education</td>
<td>6 (2.9%)</td>
<td>14 (6.7%)</td>
<td>46 (22.1%)</td>
<td>82(39.4%)</td>
<td>F: 49(60%) M: 33(40%)</td>
<td>60 (28.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. It can affect relationship with family</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td>16 (7.7%)</td>
<td>53 (25.2%)</td>
<td>73(35.1%)</td>
<td>F: 41(56%) M: 32(44%)</td>
<td>64 (30.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. It can affect peer relationship</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td>6 (2.9%)</td>
<td>36 (17.3%)</td>
<td>78(37.5%)</td>
<td>86 (41.3%) F: 50(58%) M: 36(42%)</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: My Research

In Table 51, the negative statements are given with the respective percentages of respondents under each category of response that is strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree. The category of response with the highest percentages and the percentages of female (F denotes female) and male (M denotes male) respondents are also shown. Most of the adolescents, nearly 39 %, disagreed with statement 1 and 2. Almost equal percentages of boys and girls did not think that sexuality education was dangerous or unsuitable for them in any way. However, a good number of respondents, around 27 % were undecided about statement 2. In case of statement 3, a high percentage (36%) of adolescents is found to be undecided about whether sexuality education can instigate them towards love affairs and sexual relationships and a higher number of girls are found to be unsure than boys. Adolescents, especially female adolescents seemed to disagree with the fact that sexuality education is unsuitable for schools or can hamper academic performances given that around 40% disagreed with statement 4 and 5. In case of statement 6, around 35 % of adolescents disagreed that sexuality education could affect relationship with family, yet it is noted that an equally high percentage, 25% were undecided about it. Adolescents, both boys and girls seemed to be confident that sexuality
education cannot have negative impacts on peer networks as nearly 40% strongly disagreed with statement 7. On the whole it can be stated that the adolescents did not think that sexuality education was dangerous or that it could not be included in academic structure of the school. They also identify the strong connection between peer network and sexuality education. But to some extent they mirrored the opinions of the adult caregivers when they projected doubt about its appropriateness and its probable role in promoting sexual intimacy. Adolescents’ opinion appeared contradictory given that they question the suitability of sexuality education but agrees to its introduction in schools.

In Table 52, the positive statements about sexuality education have been enlisted. Some of the positive statements are repetition of the negative statements but are worded as an affirmative statement. This is done to check the reliability of the responses. The respective percentages have been calculated for each statement, under each category of response. The response receiving the highest percentage is further analyzed to get the gender-based percentages of the respondents.

Table 52: Adolescents Attitudes towards Positive Statements on Sexuality Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Statements</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. It can create awareness against sexual abuse</td>
<td>107 (51.4%)</td>
<td>70 (33.5%)</td>
<td>24 (11.5%)</td>
<td>5 (2.4%)</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. It is provided in an age-appropriate manner</td>
<td>56 (26.9%)</td>
<td>99 (47.6%)</td>
<td>42 (20.2%)</td>
<td>9 (4.3%)</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. It instils proper attitude towards love and sexual relationships</td>
<td>52 (25%)</td>
<td>95 (45.7%)</td>
<td>54 (26%)</td>
<td>5 (2.4%)</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. It can be properly imparted as part of school education</td>
<td>40 (19.2%)</td>
<td>100 (48.1%)</td>
<td>55 (26.4%)</td>
<td>11 (5.3%)</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. It includes life skills that can improve academic performances</td>
<td>21 (10.1%)</td>
<td>72 (34.6%)</td>
<td>97 (46.6%)</td>
<td>15 (7.2%)</td>
<td>3 (1.4%)</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. It improves family relationship</td>
<td>22 (10.6%)</td>
<td>49 (23.6%)</td>
<td>99 (47.6%)</td>
<td>33 (15.9%)</td>
<td>5 (2.4%)</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. It improves peer relationships</td>
<td>31 (14.9%)</td>
<td>73 (35.1%)</td>
<td>78 (37.5%)</td>
<td>23 (11.1%)</td>
<td>3 (1.4%)</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: My Research

More than half of the adolescent respondents (51%), especially girls are highly aware of the fact that sexuality education helps to identify and address the issue of sexual abuse. Around 48% of respondents agreed with statement 9 confirming that the inclusion of age-appropriate approach within sexuality
education programmes. However, almost 20% of the sample was not sure about this basic characteristic of sexuality education programmes. Similarly, in case of statement 10, though a high percentage (48%) of adolescents believed that they can acquire proper attitude towards love and intimacy from sexuality education, yet a good number of respondents (26%) were not confident about it. In case of statement 11 which is a repetition of statement 5, the respondents showed reliability in their responses as 48% agreed in the inclusion of sexuality education programmes. This confirms that the sample of adolescents studied sees no problem in school-based propagation of sexuality education. Yet, their considerations were not totally without doubt given that around 47% are confident about the ability of life skills education included in sexuality education to contribute to students’ academic performances (statement 12). Adolescents are also unsure about statement 13 and 14 which shows that they are critically judging the claim that sexuality education can improve their relationships with family as well as peer groups.

Overall, the sample of adolescents projected rudimentary level of awareness and cautious attitude towards sexuality education. While they do not find it offensive or problematic, they are neither convinced that sexuality education can have multiple benefits in different domains other than those related to sex. They may not think that sexuality education hampers studies or relationships; they at the same time do not believe it can help them to improve relationships and communication. They could not make the connection between sexuality education and better academic results or improved relationship quotient within family or peer group simply because they constrict sexuality education in the domain related to love, intimacy and sexual abuse. At the end they projected the same restricted, partial attitude of sexuality education as their adult caregivers; a characteristic of patriarchal society which has emerge as one of the main finding of the study.

7.3.3. Sources of Sexuality Education as Identified by the Adolescents

Powell (2008) comments that though young peoples’ information and advice-seeking behaviour is haphazard and sporadic, yet it is possible to identify certain patterns. Generally, friends of the opposite sex and/or older were regarded more valuable sources of information and advice. Opinion of the peer group seems appropriate as they go through similar situations at puberty. Data shows that they also
favoured passive information sources such as magazines or leaflets over active ones such as telephone help-lines. For some young people mothers and fathers remain very close and useful sources of advice and help but for others such interaction was seen as inappropriate or inadvisable. Researchers suggest that the interaction of the young people with their parents and their level of being confident and comfortable with them are contingent upon the nature of their pre-existing relation with their parents and with other family members. Female respondents tend to talk their mothers for sex and relationships information and advice, as opposed to male respondents’ preference for communicating with their fathers. In a similar kind of study by Sprecher et al (2008) respondents rated two types of peers as source; same-sex friends and dating partners. Other frequent sources of sex education were media and reading on one’s own. Neither parent was a common source of sex education, but mothers were rated higher as a source of sex education than fathers for both girls and boys.

In the following Table 53, the main sources of sexuality education and the main forms interventions as identified by the sample of adolescents have categorised and respective percentages have been computed. It is also computed what percentage and male and female respondents have identified each sources as main sources of information regarding sex, sexuality, relationship, health and life skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Sources of Sexuality Education</th>
<th>Frequency (Percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identified Parents as Main Source</td>
<td>18 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female: 16 (89%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male: 2 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified Teachers and School Texts as Main Source</td>
<td>6 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female: 5 (83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male: 1 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified both Parents and Teachers as Main Source</td>
<td>12 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female: 9 (75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male: 3 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified Peer Group, Print and Audio-visual Media as Main Source</td>
<td>64 (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female: 29 (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male: 35 (55%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explored all the Informal and Formal Sources Equally</td>
<td>60 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could not Identify the Sources of Information Clearly</td>
<td>48 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: My Research
According to Table 53, female adolescents have availed information and have communicated more with parents and teachers than male adolescents. They have also used school texts for information more than boys. In contrast, boys have more identified peer groups and media as primary sources of information. This gender segregation in the source of sexuality education is explainable in terms of the patriarchy maintains more surveillance on female sexuality. Sprecher et al (2008) stated in their study that female sexuality is subject to more sources of formal and informal regulations through institutional sexuality education. The girls tend to have less extended peer networks or lesser access to media based sexually explicit materials. Their proximity to parents not only results from continuous surveillance but also because on attaining puberty female adolescents invariably experience information and communication related to their changing needs. Since such is not the case with boys, they become more and more distant from their caregivers.

In Table 53 only 3% of respondents identified school teachers and school texts as sources in spite of the fact that 18% of the respondents participated in Life Style/ Life Skills classes in schools. During in-depth interview, the sample of adolescence spoke of almost all the available sources that provided some form of information and understanding of sexuality and relationships. In the following section all the informal and formal sources as identified, described and explored by the adolescence has been discussed.

II. Informal Sources:

(a) Peer Group:

Adolescents are found to confide in each other and discuss sexual issues. They also communicated with same age cousins and elder siblings regarding changes experienced at adolescence. Most adolescents found communication with peer group easier as they felt that their friends understand them better being at the same age and experiencing similar life situations.
(b) **Mass Media and Internet:**

Adolescents reported of not being comfortable in discussing about sensitive matters related to sex and sexuality with others including peers. In such situation they are keener on finding answers from magazines and Internet. Most adolescent boys are exposed to and/or have access to pornographic materials through their association with peer group, through internet, mobile and adult magazines. Certain television programmes depicting teenage crimes and relationship issues confronted by the youths are also popular sources of information and ideas. These include the programme like *Gumrah* aired in Channel V. For example, many like AB-4 informed that they gathered some idea about sexual abuse and gender violence from these programmes. They also came to know about reproductive health, contraception and use of condoms and overall hygiene from television advertisements and magazines.

(c) **Parents:**

Few adolescents reported to have held open discussion with both parents regarding love and relationships. Adolescents only confide with parents when they find them open, friendly and non-judgmental. To some extent, most of the respondents preferred to communicate and share with their mother than with their father. For instance AG-74 states that she share “every little detail” with her mother whom she consider as her best friend. So far are fathers are concerned, most of the adolescents reported to be shy or scared of them and maintained distance from them.

II. **Formal Sources and Agents:**

(a) **Biology/ Life Science Textbooks:**

Majority of the respondents reported to have received scientific knowledge about menstruation, human reproductive process and sexually transmitted diseases from biology or life science textbooks. A boy of class ten stated during interview that he went through biology books of senior classes in order to know in details about all things related to human reproductive anatomy as he considered the information given in textbook reliable. AG-186 stated that she got idea about the negative effects of early marriage
from Biology books. AG-143 reported to have received comprehensive understanding of the period of adolescence from school texts; the particular section was titled ‘growth, reproduction and development’ and she read it in class eight. From the detail discussion she came to know about the physical changes occurring during adolescence, how adolescents define relationships and how they tend to become impatient when adult caregivers cannot understand their specific requirements.

(b) Life skills/Life Style education classes; Moral education Classes and Teachers:

Life skills education was initiated as a part of adolescence education programme around 2004 in schools affiliated to CBSE and Life Style programme began in schools affiliated to WBBSE. But before that and even at present, many schools affiliated to CBSE and ICSE are found to conduct moral education classes that deal mainly with personal integrity and behavioural ethics. Many adolescents spoke of these school-based interventions as active sources of understanding about life skills including relationship skills and the stage of adolescence. For example, AG-8 reported that in life skills classes, teachers mentioned the psychological problems faced by adolescents like mood swings, excessive desire to be independent and strong urge for self expression. AG-7 reported that the teachers have informed them about possible negative influences of peer pressure and the problems of early marriage, teenage pregnancy and motherhood. Others like AB-75 reported that in life skills classes, teachers dealt with how to achieve positive mental attitude towards work, how to achieve self-confidence and be assertive. AG-43 and AG-44 could improve their communication skills through life skills tutorial. AG-57 gained gender sensitivity against discriminations from schools. AG-55 learned to manage stress and solve problem situations from life skills educators. Teachers also created awareness against drug addiction. AB-89 reported of gaining useful insights from moral education classes about relationship skills, friendship, break-ups and peer influences. He categorically pointed out that teachers dealt with relevant problems of gender violence and discussed about being respectful towards women. AG-92 reported to have attended health related lectures in her convent school where often external experts were invited to give talks adolescent-relate issues. AG-100 and AG-101 received detail discussion
about menstruation, reproductive organs, sexually transmitted diseases and use of condom from their Biology teacher who even explained ovulation through visual cues. AG-188, AG-186 and AG-184 reported to gain awareness regarding sexual abuse, on how to prohibit such occurrence and how to seek help from adult caregivers from life skills classes.

(c) Workshops on Adolescents’ Issues:

Adolescents reported to have attended workshops on various issues related to adolescence. In some schools workshops on gender sensitivity and gender equality were held regularly. AG-37 stated that by attending these workshops she has became conscious of gendered notions woven into everyday life. AG-72 reported that her co-education school conducted workshop only for adolescent girls. Quiz programme on the adolescent stage of life reported to be held in few schools; it helped in understanding issues related to reproductive and sexual health. Workshops are also held by sanitary napkin manufacturing companies such as Whispers and Stayfree in schools to provide information to adolescent girls about puberty, menarche and menstrual hygiene. AG-13 reported to have attended one such workshop in her school. She reported that only girls were allowed to attend the workshop and though the speakers mainly focused on menstruation and menstrual hygiene they also discussed about sexual intercourse, safe sex and contraception.

(d) Commonsense and Reasoning

It is found that adolescents deal with many issues related to relationship, communication, decision-making without proper application of the life skills. In this context many adolescents stated that they deal with these issues with the help of commonsense. For instance, AB-15 who has attended some life skills classes stated that he tries to resist peer pressure on his own and have learned to take the correct decision through personal experiences. Similarly while speaking about their capacity to form healthy relationship with family members and friends AG-31 and AG-33 did not make any reference of life skills education classes; rather they stated that such understanding comes from within. Few adolescents
commented that they and their peers are aware of the negative effects of early marriage, teenage pregnancy and risky sexual behaviour beforehand; it is part of general awareness and knowledge about present social circumstances. Others like AB-87 stated that he mostly acts on his natural instinct. Similarly, AB-206 stated that his understanding on love have developed on its own. He commented,

“I will not be able to explain how I developed it but it was not told by anyone, not even my peers.”

AB-107 referred to inner logical reasoning that helped him to be assertive, confident and capable of identifying artificial notions propagated by advertisements.

7.4. Adolescents’ Reflections on Sexuality Education

Adolescents acquired sexuality education from various informal and formal sources and agents. The previous section explored that domain. It is also necessary to understand what adolescents think of those various sources, how they evaluate them or to what extent they internalise the information and ideas from them. This section focuses on the adolescents’ opinions about and reflections on the various sources and agents of sexuality education. It explores adolescents’ dependency, reliance and trust on them because that determines the extent to which they share and communicate with educators and internalise the information provided by the sources. Critical evaluation of the role played by sources and the agents also locates the problems faced by the adolescents. Measor (2004) found that gender influenced adolescents’ responses towards sex, sexuality and relationship education. For instance, boys are more anxious to gather explicit details about sex as to them knowing about sex means knowing about what to do during sexual intercourse. Knowing about sexual intercourse is regarded as a male responsibility and not knowing is perceived shameful. As a result it is natural for boys to depend on pornography for providing explicit information about sex generally unavailable in sexuality education classes in schools or at home. In comparison, girls trusted family member such as mothers, sisters and aunts along with peer groups for providing sexual information.
In the following section, adolescents’ reflections and external factors shaping their evaluation of the agents and sources of sexuality education have been discussed in detail.

7.4.1. Reflecting on Informal Sources of Sexuality Education

In this section, the informal sources and agents of sexuality education are evaluated and they are organised in the order of their popularity and importance so far the adolescents are concerned. So first peer group have been explored followed by media and lastly, parents.

I. On Peer Group

Young peoples’ interaction and attachment with peer groups increases during adolescence. Parents and teachers often complain of the increasing influence of peer group on adolescents who develops an easy propensity to follow peer-induced behaviour especially in dealing with their relationship issues and sexuality. While this may be largely true, adolescents are found to be capable of distinguishing between positive and negative influences of the peer group. Adolescents are asked to reflect on the peer group and evaluate them as a source of sexuality education. In the following sections the narratives of the respondents are categorised on the basis of their content.

(a) Positive Communication of Peer Group:

Majority of adolescents reported that they find their peer group approachable and confide sensitive and personal issues related to body, love and sexual behaviour. They found it easy to interact with them because they perceive themselves and their peer group as equals, being of the same age and occupying same socio-cultural location. They experience similar physical changes, emotions, confusions and problems; as such mutual understanding and subsequent sharing takes place more conveniently. For example, AG-7 describes how she and her friends shared their worry about the disturbing growth of body hair and are equally anxious about irregular occurrence of menstruation. Young people being too conscious of fashion are often found to discuss about their looks and dresses. AB-5 added,
“The most important point is friends do not judge us, they are quite supportive. “

(b) Complying with Peer Pressure:

It is not that adolescents have positive considerations about their peer group and peer relationships. They could identify forceful compliance to specific behaviours that is peer pressure. Many respondents reported that they were forced to participate and show interest in discussion on love, sex and sexual behaviour. AG-13 mentions that a group of friends in her class would regularly bunk school; they would leave home in school dress, change clothes in the bathrooms of the city malls and will roam around or watch movies. AG-13 observed,

“They tried to influence and pressurised others to join their group and to act like them.”

It is also noted that adolescents do not always consider the information received from peer group as reliable. They found the information to be vague and some like AG-145 ratified the possibility of peer-led information of being wrong. On the whole, adolescents in spite of communicating more with peers especially they are aware of the dominating and constraining group norms within peer networks.

II. On Mass Media

The impact of mass media on adolescents’ attitude towards relationship and sexuality is relentless and unfathomable yet one can question whether adolescents simply absorb media messages passively or they do show active agency in questioning Media.

(a) Awareness through Mass Media and Internet:

Some television programmes based on real life incidents are very popular with a section of the sample, adolescents belonging to middle and upper-middle income group families. These programmes provided strong messages regarding complexities of intimate relationships such as infatuation, jealousy, misunderstanding and disloyalty within peer group. Social issues like dowry system and domestic violence are also addressed. Few films are also regarded as creating awareness related to youth
problems and social problems. For example AG-39 stated that films based on teenagers helped her to gain some idea about college-bred romances; its nature and related complications. Adolescent marked Internet as useful source of information on sex and relationship; it maintained privacy while providing answers and did not cause undue embarrassment. For example, AG-13 stated,

“I got information from science textbooks and to certain extent from parents, but I came to know what a condom does and how it looks like from Internet.”

A fair section of adolescents, mostly boys, rated pornography as a reliable and safe source of information on sexual behaviour.

(b) Fabrications propagated by Mass Media and Internet:

Many adolescents evaluated mass media as an unreliable source of information. For example, AG-3 stated,

“I never really tried to find answers from television programmes, films, Internet and pornographic materials because these are mainly for entertainment not for providing facts.”

AG-41 commented that media often creates pejorative images in our mind especially through sexually expletive and debasing content. For instance, AG-31 believed,

“Pornography may affect the psyche of the young people and provoke them to commit gender-based crime; more specifically gender-based sexually violent crimes.”

Even some male respondents are not very satisfied with what they found on Internet. For example, AB-40 reported that on searching the Internet for scientific information about human reproduction he came across only vulgar materials. Similarly another male respondent AB-75 reflected that pornography was not at all informative; it only serves to sexually stimulate.

The findings of this study cannot be generalised yet it shows that adolescents may not be mere passive recipients of popular ideas. They do questions and react against exploitative and crude visual
depictions. At the same time they can identify the potential role of mass media to create awareness about social issues.

(e) On Parents

Parents are the foremost socializing agents yet they come last in our discussion on informal sexuality education because parents-adolescent communication and sharing is a difficult terrain especially when it embarks upon any topics related to sex and sexual behaviour. Since parents are in authority positions given they are the main socializing agents, it becomes difficult for them to be appear friendly and behave on informal terms. Along with that, taboos surround open and frank discussion on sexuality. The parent-child relationship is hold sacred, enamoured in mutual respect and therefore strictly devoid of any reference to sex or sexuality. Yet the child grows up and enters his or her pubertal stage primarily under the strict supervision of the parents. Mothers play significant role in educating the girl child about her physical changes. The elders in the family and parents do communicate about socially approved behaviour that includes indirect suggestion on post-puberty sexual inclinations. But to what extent familial communication satisfies the need of the adolescents is the question that we ask in this section. The role each parent play during adolescence is evaluated in the paragraphs given below. In the following Table 54 explore the behaviour of the adolescents in relation to their parents.

Table 54: Percentage of Adolescents Communicating with Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adolescents on Sharing and Communicating with Mother</th>
<th>Frequency (Percentage)</th>
<th>Gender-Based Categorization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>114 (55%)</td>
<td>Female: 75 (66%) Male: 39 (34%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>65 (31%)</td>
<td>Female: 30 (46%) Male: 35 (54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>29 (14%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>208</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adolescents on Sharing and Communicating with Father</th>
<th>Frequency (Percentage)</th>
<th>Gender-Based Categorization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>42 (20.2%)</td>
<td>Female: 20 (48%) Male: 22 (52%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>136 (65.4%)</td>
<td>Female: 85 (63%) Male: 51 (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>30 (14.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>208</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: My Research
The data shows that adolescents open up, share and communicate more with their mother (65%) than with their father. In patriarchal set up mother is not the head of the family, neither is she the main authoritative socializing agent. As such she is capable of forming informal bonding with her children which the father cannot because he has to play the role of strict disciplinarian. The father is also preoccupied with external affairs. According to Table 19, girls communicated more with their mother whereas adolescent boys are found to be more comfortable in communicating with their father. Same sex closed the gaps in communication by lessening hesitation or shame. The following paragraphs analyses the narratives provided by the adolescents lending a more comprehensive understanding of parent-adolescent communication, exploring its merits and demerits, in relation to sexuality education.

(a) Adolescents’ Sharing and Communicating with Parents:

Generally, adolescence is a phase when the children tend to get distanced from parents and the communication them are often ridden with arguments, misunderstanding and conflicts. It is only partially true for the present sample of adolescents for some respondents are found to be quite close to their family. They could relate more to their parents than to their peer groups. A fair number of adolescent girls are found to be more close to their mothers than they are to their friends. They claimed to be comfortable with their mother and are able to share about their private feelings and thoughts to them like one would do with a friend.

A good number of adolescents, both boys and girls reported to have held proper frank and open discussion with their parents. For example, AG-2 did not hesitate to question her mother regarding reproduction when her brother was born. AG-7 her parents discussed and explained mood swings; such open discussion lessened her irritation towards her parents and improved her communication with them. AG-8 also reported to had held frank and detailed discussion with her mother regarding child sexual abuse. AB-40 appreciates that his parents have always allowed him to voice his feelings; he has never felt ashamed or afraid in communicating with them. AG-96 too finds both her parents approachable since they do not force her to think in their way and allow her to voice her own opinion.
She also finds it easy to discuss with her parents as they do not have any preconceived notions. These adolescents acknowledge that their parents trusted them and were less authoritative.

Though mothers are more accessible and available to adolescents than their father, yet there are exceptions here as well. AB-84 and AB-88 are few of those adolescents who are closer to their father than their mother. They are more confident in communicating with their fathers whom they found to be more broad-minded and non-judgmental. They experienced more support and understanding from their fathers in case of any problem or complications. AB-199 preferred to share with his father more as he does not get emotional and is less anxious than his mother.

Adolescents also reported to have benefitted from opening up with their secrets, confusions and troubles to their parents. AG-179 stated that she realized from experience that by sharing with her mother everything she can ensure herself safety and security, emotionally as well as physically. She described a situation that took place in the recent past when her classmate falsely accused her. AG-179 stated,

“My friend used my cell phone to call her boyfriend and when her parents came to know about it she lied and accused me of having a relationship. I did not hide anything my mother. I felt relieved when my mother trusted and supported me.”

The situation would have worsened if AG-179 would not have been open and frank with her mother. In a similar case, AG-140 who has a healthy, open relationship with her mother benefitted from sharing. AG-140 came by pornographic videos accidentally while playing games in a relative’s computer. She did not hesitate to inform her mother what she saw. Her mother instead of avoiding the issue explained everything to her. AG-140 thinks that she has been able to develop healthy attitude towards sex because her mother always encouraged free and open communication regarding sexual relationships. She added,

“I can feel the difference between me and most of my friends in our attitude toward sex; most of my friends think sex is something dirty; sex is only associated with pornography.”
AB-198 confessed his habit of smoking to his parents who then discussed with him the negative effects of the habit instead of reprimanding him. It helped him to stay away from such addictions. Some adolescents shared about their romantic associations with their parents. Their parents did not approve of their romantic escapades but they discussed their views on love and romance which the adolescents find enlightening. AB-89 and AB-198 trust that their parents will allow them to commit to a relationship in the right time with the right person. What is positive about these open communications between adolescents and their parents is that they do not feel repressed in opening up about love and romance; a restricted topic of discussion.

(b) Problems Affecting Communication with Parents:

There are multitudes of problems that creep into the parent-adolescent sphere of communication. On analysing the adolescents’ responses the following recurring issues emerges as main impediments in proper sharing and communication between the young people and their caregivers.

i. The Question of Trust:

Adolescents reported to be hesitant in sharing with their parents because they feel that they are not trusted by their parents. Parents are prone to misunderstand them. For instance, AG-39 reported being upset of the fact that her mother took away her mobile suspecting that she engages in sex talks with friends. Parents’ overly suspicious attitude results from their anxiety and concerns for their children’s wellbeing in present problem-ridden social circumstances but in the end such attitude prevented them to trust their children and build in confidence and reliance in the relationship. In case the adolescents are involved in some risky behaviour, their tendency to maintain secrecy is heightened by their parents’ distrust. Thus AB-5 was very secretive about taking part in this study. He was more afraid because not only he has a girlfriend for the past one year; he is also physically and sexually active. As such he was very cautious about the fact that his responses remain confidential. His parents are totally unaware of his actions.
ii. **Parental Surveillance:**

Where there is lack of trust the degree of surveillance is bound to be high. The lack of privacy and the high degree of parental surveillance the adolescents are subjected to also affects their interpersonal communication. The degree of surveillance can be observed during the field work itself. For instance AG-9 wanted to talk to me in private but her mother directly opposed to the idea. She stated that there can be no conversation involving her daughter that cannot be held in her presence. AG-9 is not different from any other girl of her age; she wants to have fun with friends. She is also interested in boys but she is aware that her parents are quite strict and will never allow her any freedom. She wrote in her questionnaire that her parents completely dislike frivolous behaviour and she avoids having fun as she does not want to go into any form of confrontation with them. AG-9 was found to be quite conscious of her mother’s presence during the interview and always gave politically correct answers, each time looking at her mother for approval. She hardly referred to any sensitive issues and projected herself as an asexual being. While referring to changes in her during puberty she only referred to pimples and hair growth completely avoiding the other more apparent physical changes such as development of breast and menstruation. Interestingly, when I asked her mother about her opinion on adolescents’ attraction towards opposite sex and romantic relationships, AG-9 intently listened to her mother. It was clear that she never felt brave enough to ask such questions to her mother and she was curious to know about her mother’s attitude towards these issues. The case of AG-9 reflected how restricted and closed communication between adolescent children and their parents can be, especially when both the adolescent and the parent consciously avoids sensitive issues out of fear and inhibitions.

AG-13 also complained of excessive surveillance at home. Studying in a coeducation school she often has her male classmates calling her at home out of some necessity; it is not approved by her parents. Her father inquires in detail as to why the boy called. Such behaviour from her parents leaves her angry. AB-206 commented during his interview that parental surveillance and guidance is necessary to enable the adolescents to take the right decision but at the same time he feels that at some point of time the
adolescents should learn to take right decision and for that to happen, parental supervision and surveillance need to lessen; in other words they should allow the child to grow up. Due to high degree of surveillance adolescents hides their activities from their parents instead of being honest with them. Thus AB-141 banks school and watch movies in school hours knowing that his parents will not allow him to watch film with friends. In a group interview, around ten adolescent girls described their experience of extreme surveillance from parents as well as elder brother and sisters in their everyday life. They stated that their family members keeps a detailed check on where they going and with whom. They are not allowed to visit any place alone with friends and even if they are allowed rarely they are followed by family members. Some girls even reported that they feared that their parents will marry them off as soon as they finish school. Such a step is an extension of patriarchal surveillance over adolescent girls.

iii. The Distant Parent:

The narratives revealed that adolescents often could not even connect with their parents let alone communicating with them. The parents are either too distant or too busy in relinquishing their duties to have time to observe or listen to their wards. It will not be completely false to claim that at certain times adolescents seemed to be completely alienated from their parents in spite physical and relational proximity. Thus AG-2 denies any form of relation with her father; she commented that they do not spent much time together and that there is no mutual understanding between them. She also seemed to be afraid of her father. Many adolescents remarked that their father does not have enough time for them. AG-182 pointed out that they do not even meet their father the whole day. Some adolescents like AG-6 felt that they are less appreciated by her parents and their criticisms alienate her more from her parents. Both AG-100 and AG-101 belonged to elite families where it was also found that the parents are quite busy to spend any personal time with the adolescents. Their relationships with family members are strained. As such they are closer to their friends and cousins. In diametrically opposite cases such as that of AB-204 who belonged to a lower income group family the picture is all the same.
Communication with parent is disrupted here due to unstable economic situation of the family. The parents remain too busy to provide minimum sustenance to their families and the adolescents find them rather irritable and angry all the time. Thus AB-204 states that his family situation has never been conducive enough to enable him to be emotionally dependant on them.

iv. Absence of Understanding:

Adolescents felt their parents simply fail to understand them, their curiosities and point of views because of the generation gap. For example, AG-31 wrote that her parents still have a conservative mindset appropriate for time gone by and therefore cannot understand the issues of her generations. The parents’ incapability to understand often causes them to panic and led them to angry outburst which negatively affects their relationship with their children. Thus AB-84 feels that communicating with parents becomes difficult as they often tend behave rudely when questioned. AG-144 explains,

“Parents actually get agitated when they are asked questions related to sex or body because they fear that their child is going astray by thinking about adult stuff, they fail to understand that their child is actually asking for help and advice.”

AB-206 confessed to have felt suicidal after facing angry reproaches from parents. It is also reported that parents hardly listens to the opinions of the adolescents. Thus AG-182 stated that communication with adults become impossible at times because they tend to allocate more importance to their wish than listen to what their children have to say. AG-90 is of the opinion that adults react too much to any situation; she informed,

“My mother stopped talking to me when she came to know that I have developed liking for a classmate. I was so angry, irritated and exasperated that do not shared with her anything anymore.”
v. **Parents Being Judgmental Emphasising Abstinence:**

The tendency of parents of putting undue emphasis on morality, value education, the traditional Indian set up and sexual abstinence creates distances between them and the adolescents. Such conservative and orthodox thought process is not compatible with freedom loving, resilient, passionate and light-hearted youths. Thus AB-124 states that in spite of his parents being friendly it becomes difficult for him to share because of their excessive appreciation of moral and value-laden character of Indian culture. If parents overtly idealise sexual continence it becomes difficult for adolescents to discuss sexual inclination or sexuality related issues with them. AG-145 commented,

> “If possible adults would not allow us to watch films that have even a single intimate scene, how can we then ask them about sexual relationship”.

Many adolescents reported that their parents warned them about not to get involved in romantic affairs. These adolescents categorically mentioned that they have been told forming such relationships will ruin their lives. AG-7 found such instructions from her parents disturbing. She states,

> “Getting attracted to opposite sex and forming relationship is natural for us but parents always advise to avoid such relationships as it can create ill reputations in school.”

AB-15 too reported that his parents have asked him time and again to keep control over his senses as if pleasure or love is forbidden for young people. Adolescents naturally maintained silence out of shame and fear of social disapproval. Parents’ inability to accept the natural tendencies of the adolescents leads them to disapprove of adolescents’ proximity to their peer group. They give inappropriate advice regarding selection of friends. Thus AG-9 is asked by her parents to build friendship with only those who are good in studies. It is evident that her parents are keen on her educational achievements and not on acquiring genuine friends or develop proper relationship skills. Few adolescents commented that parents disapprove of intimacy with opposite sex as such affairs discredit their capability and efficiency because they failed to make their children follow socially approved normative behaviour. AB-206
pointed out that his mother did not permitted him to continue his friendship with a girl simply out of the fear that if something goes wrong in some way then the girl’s parents will harass and insult her. The consequence is that the adolescents can never learn to initiate and maintain stable and matured peer network.

Thus the parent-adolescent interactional space is a complex blend of authority and control on one hand and understanding and guidance on the other hand. In imparting sexuality education the parents succeed in providing certain elementary information but fail to continue and improve upon the communication processes and interpersonal empathy.

7.4.2. Reflecting on Formal Sexuality Education

Adolescents were also questioned on their experiences with formal sexuality education that is imparted by selected school teachers, educators, counsellors through specially sanctioned classes. The following section aims to decipher the effects of these classes and that of school teachers on the adolescents.

I. On Life Skills and Life Style Classes

The Life Skills classes were initiated under Life Skills education programme in schools affiliated to Central Board of Secondary Education and Life Style classes were started under Life Style education in schools affiliated to West Bengal Board of Secondary Education. Both the programmes aimed to impart life skills along with some essential information related to reproductive and sexual health.

Adolescents who have attended Life Style classes hardly mentioned acquiring any positive learning experiences. So far as Life Skills classes are concerned, few adolescents found them to be informative and relevant. For instance AG-2 stated,

“We used to watch films on social issues and documentaries of real incidents in life skills classes and issues like sexual discrimination, child labour, harassment against women and child marriage were discussed.”
AG-38 also reported of workshop being conducted under Life Skills education programme on rape and violence against women where the gang rape case that took place in New Delhi o December 2012 was discussed. She found the discussion enlightening as the speaker taught them the right perspective to analyse a rape where one should not focus on the victims’ faults but on the broader social patterns.

In general, majority of the adolescents did not refer to constructive contribution of the schools and life skills/life style. Some respondents stated that the school authorities lacked the right attitude; they were highly orthodox in dealing with teenagers. The mentality of some school management was rigid enough to instruct separate sitting arrangement for boys and girls in higher classes. Another section of the adolescents reported that they did not found life skills classes enjoyable. AG-9 commented,

“Life skills were boring as the concerned teachers would make us write essays on irrelevant topics such as whether schools should continue board examinations in class ten instead of discussing anything related to adolescent issues or relationships.”

AB-12 reported that the life style classes hardly encouraged student to express their views; the students acted as passive listeners. In spite of attending a good number of life skills/life style classes adolescents claimed to have not learned anything substantial and relevant. AB-40 elaborated on this point, he states,

“These specially ordained classes failed to bring in any change in the our behaviour and attitude.”

He explained that they never learn to implement life skills in their daily life and the educator or the concerned teacher never evaluated students to find out how much they have learned. He reported that in spite sensitizing workshops, awareness programmes and interaction with the school counsellor some of the boys from his school showed atrocious behaviour of taking offensive pictures of girl students and uploading them in a social networking site for fun.
AB-206 stated,

“Our school has not conducted Life Style Programme properly; if serious they would have assigned a separate teacher for the classes, the school management asked either the Mathematics teacher or the English teacher to take the classes. The teachers were not properly trained for at times they acted quite embarrassed in discussing topics related to sex.”

Adolescents are not aware of the unique approaches of life skills; in spite of attending life skills classes they confused life skills with moral education. They do not understand that life skills are not values, they are heuristic tools that aims to prepare learners to critically explore their own attitudes and enable them to take informed decisions about various aspects of their lives including sex and sexual relationships. Adolescents believed that life skills education is about growing up to be a gentleman because it refers to good manners such as respect for elders and love for younger ones. The biographies of national and regional figures such as Swami Vivekananda are discussed in life skills classes as reported by few adolescents.

Thus AG-33 commented,

“Life skills education classes appeared same as the moral education classes that we had in junior level.”

II. On Teachers and School Counsellors

Teachers and school counsellors are important agents assigned with the task of imparting formal sexuality education to adolescents through school-based educational programmes such as discussed above as well as through other mediums such us workshops, seminars, biology classes and problem-specific counselling. Adolescents were asked to rate the performance of the teachers as life skills educators, to evaluate how much insights they have gained from specifically assigned life style classes taken by trained teachers and to what extent teachers were being able to counsel. The following section
deals with the responses of the adolescents in this respect. The data given in Table 55 also provide a quick understanding of the adolescents’ reflection on their teachers.

### Table 55: Percentage of Adolescents Communicating with Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adolescents on Sharing and Communicating with Teachers</th>
<th>Frequency (Percentage)</th>
<th>Gender-Based Categorization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>59 (28.4%)</td>
<td>Female: 37 (63%) Male: 22 (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>111 (53.4%)</td>
<td>Female: 63 (57%) Male: 48 (43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>38 (18.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>208</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: My Research

Only 28% of adolescent respondents reported that they communicated with their teachers in comparison to 53% who did not find it easy to share with them. Respondents’ gender does not produce any different conclusion about their attitude as high percentages of female adolescents are positive as well as negative about the role of the teacher. It may be possible that the adolescent girls found it easier to confide in female teachers respondents who participated in higher numbers than male teachers in the present study. Adolescent boys were mostly indecisive about their position in respect to teachers.

Those adolescents who reported to have successfully communicated with their teachers regarded them as a trusted source of information and relied on their guidance to achieve emotional stability and educational competence. Adolescents attending life skills classes experienced positive interactive sessions with the educators which improved their communication skills. AG-172 reported that the teachers discussed issues such as the increasing distance between adolescents and their families, the trouble adolescents’ face in concentrating in studies and their growing interests in romance and relationships. The teachers also discussed on how to say ‘no’ properly in right places to avoid complications. AG-33 acknowledged the role of the school counsellor in improving her interpersonal relationships with her family members and her friends. With the help of her school counsellor she was
being able to identify her emotions, share those emotions and feelings effectively with others and could confidently presents her opinions in front of others. It is found that the positive reflections about the teacher educators mostly depended on the degree to which he or she appeared approachable, friendly and non-judgmental by the adolescents. Thus AB-206 stated that the very first reaction to teachers has been that of fear but over the years their relationship with teachers changed; it become open enough for them to ask their teachers about sensitive issues such as sexual assaults.

AG-96 commented,

“Teachers as Life skills educators were approachable, they listened to whatever we have to say and their responses were never rude.”

While some adolescents reflected positively on their teacher educators, others were less comfortable with the idea of confiding and sharing with teachers. Adolescents in their interview supported the idea of introducing school-based sexuality education but they opposed the idea that school teachers will be involved in imparting sexuality education. AG-3 explains that teachers are not that frank and approachable enough to discuss issues related to sex and as student she never felt like going to them for guidance as they have a tendency to easily misunderstand. AB-4 also stated that teachers might find questioning on sex as inappropriate. AG-7 claimed to be afraid of asking her teachers any intimate or personal questions. AG-13 also stated that talking to teachers become very difficult as they interrogate students more than listening to them. AB-107 observed that teachers are offended when asked sensitive and controversial questions; for them it is a sign of disrespect. Some respondents like AB-73 and AB-84 clearly stated that they do not feel connected to teachers as persons in any way so the question of sharing or communicating with them never crosses their mind. They also think that teachers will not be able to impart sexuality education effectively. Teachers acting as school counsellor also failed to address the needs of the adolescents in some cases. For example AG -140 reported that the psychology teacher who was in charge of counselling could hardly understand their problems; she always tried to prove that the students are wrong and that they should always obey what they are being told.
On the whole, the teacher educators failed to emerge as an effective guide and mentor to the adolescents. Though few adolescents were able to approach them for guidance and support most were too apprehensive and discouraged to question them on intimate and sensitive issues.

7.4.3. Adolescents’ Suggestions for Effective Sexuality Education

As noted in the very beginning, the focus of this chapter is on the adolescents. As such their attitude, opinions and reflections regarding informal and formal sexuality education, its sources, its components and its inbuilt difficulties have been explored. An added consideration on adolescents’ association with sexuality education is their suggestions for making it more effective and fruitful. The following section critically analyses the overall responses of the adolescents to deduce their suggestions into three broad categories.

I. Productive Involvement of Parents and Teachers

The interactional interface between the adolescents and their primary caregivers, namely, their parents and the teacher-educators is a complex and a critical one and it has already been explored how adolescents reflects on them. There were both positive and negative responses from the adolescents so far as the involvement of parents and teachers as agents of sexuality education is concerned. On further analysis a subtle contradiction is noted in the responses of most of the adolescents. They informed that they do not communicate or share with their parents and teachers and are more comfortable in getting information from Internet, magazines, films and from their peer group. Yet when asked which particular agent or person or source they found to be most reliable, almost all of them agreed that parents and teachers are more trustworthy and dependable sources of information compared to peer group and mass media. They added that advice and guidance provided by parents and teachers are always beneficial for them. Thus we find that 65 % (135 out of 208) adolescents regarded parents and teachers as reliable sources of sexuality education. On the other hand only 9 % adolescents stated that they do not find advice and information provided by parents and teachers as reliable. Adolescents
believed that it is possible to create awareness among parents by involving them as sexuality educator whereby they can be more understanding and non-judgmental in their attitude. Changes in their attitude and behaviour will help the adolescents to open up to them more easily. AG-188 pointed out in this context that the mother being the closest person to a child is the best person suitable for imparting sexuality education, if properly trained. AB-206 also commented that if the teacher-educator or the parent is not shy to initiate the conversation and if they are able to directly address the issues instead of adopting an indirect approach, the level of inhibition within the overall learning process will lessen. Another respondent AB-124 mentioned that if sexuality education is to be introduced in schools, there should be strict regulation to guide and outline the whole process so as to prevent teachers as well as students from being insincere. AB-205 also stated that exclusive classes should be arranged for discussions related to body, health, relationships and sexuality and it should be ensured that those students or learners who are to attend this class come with the right attitude. Learners should not mock the initiative or ridicule the educator or the teacher in any way. The following Table 56 shows that a moderately high number of adolescents are hopeful about the training and productive inclusion of parents and teachers as proper agents imparting sexuality education.

**Table 56: Adolescents’ Opinion on Involvement of Parents and Teachers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents as Sexuality Educators</th>
<th>Frequency (Percentage)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>80 (38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>62 (30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>66 (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers as Sexuality Educators</th>
<th>Frequency (Percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>131 (63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>30 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>47 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: My Research

If the data is compared it is evident that adolescents support the involvement and inclusion of the teachers more than the parents. Most probably the idea of the parents being trained is not compatible
with the informal relationship network found within family. Parents cannot be perceived as formal educators. They are rather seen as intimate associates who can counter the adolescent issues by providing support and empathy.

II. Proper Inclusion of School Counsellors and Experts

Learners also seem to prefer experts and counsellors because of their professionalism and their application of interactive and active teaching learning method which included group discussion (Allen 2009; 41). It was found that learners emphasized on the depth and range of knowledge of the experts and on the fact that they are properly trained as a professional in this domain. Proper training ensured that the expert or the professional will effectively handle sensitive and controversial issues and will recognize sexual diversity. The experts are also preferred because they have high personal experience in dealing with sexuality issues. In the present study also we find that adolescents benefitted from proper participation of experts, professionals and from the efficient role played by the school counsellors. Thus AG-13 is highly appreciative of her school counsellor. She stated that the counsellor being an experienced person have the correct knowledge and provide accurate facts. She and her friends are reportedly shared more freely with the counsellor. Adolescents are more comfortable with sharing personal problems with professionals and counsellors because at times they preferred unknown and external experts having required professionalism, interesting pedagogy and skills in place of known faces such as school teachers. Thus the survey data found that more than 32 % of the respondent adolescents were of the opinion that sexuality education provided by skilled personnel can lead them to a more secured life in which they will be able to make informed choices based on like skills.

III. Introduction of Peer-educators

Peer-educators are the trained senior school students who are trained to act as sources of sexuality information for other students. Young people preferred peer-educators because they do not enjoy structurally equal relationship with most adults (Allen 2009; 38). However the learners demand that
peer-educator should be knowledgeable, should take their tasks seriously and should be non-judgmental. In some cases learners hesitated to share with the peer-educators as they were known to them and they were afraid that peer educators would not be able to maintain confidentiality. In the present survey, 56% of adolescent respondents are found to be positive about peer-based learning in sexuality education classes. They believe that peer-learning processes will benefit them. Many adolescent respondents are eager to act as peer-educator. They stated that they would like to learn about sexuality education in order to guide their friends and other students. They are confident that as peer-educator they would be able to prevent others from undertaking risky sexual activity without proper information. AB-206 also believed that peer-education can actually lessen the percentage of rape cases and incidents of sexual molestation. The reason he states is that when same age people can talk and discuss about sexual desire, they will be able to vent out repressed feelings which will act to control extreme behavioural outburst.

7.5. **Summery Findings:**

1. The average age of the sample of adolescent respondents are found to be 16 years approximately. Age wise the sample is homogenous, stable and matured given that most respondents belonged to mid- and late adolescence. Almost all adolescents went to regular, co-education schools and represented educated, middle-income group families belonging to the Bengali-Hindu community. The two well represented variables which emerged as causal factors while analyzing data and identifying association are, (i) gender and (ii) boards of affiliation of the schools.

2. The sample of adolescent-respondents is also found to exhibit certain behavioural problems and the sexuality issues. Gender socialization strongly affected female adolescents who are found to be more sexually and/or romantically involved (64%) than their male counterparts and at the same time suffering from mental stress, anxiety and depression (86%) because they experienced shame and guilt for their actions. Contrastingly, for most male adolescents romantic
associations and sexual relationships is found to be rewarding and a matter of pride. It is also found that the boys and the girls have chosen different ways to express sexual repression. The girls directed their reactions inwardly in form of self-doubt and self-inflictions. But the boys responded by questioning the established norms and they found alternative ways of sexual gratification. The sample of adolescents not only found it difficult to share sensitive, personal issues during the research they were also not able to take independent decision devoid of fear of parents’ reactions marking their subservient position within family.

3. One-third of the sample of adolescents conceptualized sexuality education as a holistic learning that enables them to deal with various nuances of sex, sexuality and relationships; that it makes them aware of self in relation to society, fosters life skills and gender-sensitivity and most importantly, lessens confusions from stage of adolescence, giving it directions by installing right attitude towards sex and relationship. In contrast to this, around two-third of the adolescents defined sexuality education as having a problem-specific, sex-related orientation; instructing them about adult sexual practices and reproduction and about associated emotions, concurrently preaching about abstaining from sexual risk-taking to prevent spread of infections and rise of unwanted pregnancies. Adolescents are also found to harbour certain misunderstandings regarding sexuality education; they consider it a strictly topic of adult discussion and therefore a prohibited domain, others considered it as main source of information about opposite sex and yet others, mostly boys, found sexuality education as an opportunity to held titillating sex-talk. These misinterpretations underlined by strong cultural and gendered socialization can be problematic, thwarting the learning goals of sexuality education programmes.

4. The sample of adolescents is questioned on their level of knowledge and understanding of various components of sexuality education programme. At a glance, most of the adolescents are found to have high level of information on stage of adolescence, human reproduction and sexual
relationship, medium level of information about hygiene, early marriage, relationship skills, gender issues, decision-making and peer pressure and low level of information about reproductive and sexual health and about how to interpret media. Whether statistically significant relations exist between Adolescents’ level of information and others determining factors such as gender and schools’ organizational and economic status have been explored. In few cases, null hypothesis could not be rejected as critical value of chi-square at a given level of significance (\( \alpha = 0.05 \)) and degree of freedom is greater than calculated value of chi-square. It implies that the differences between the categories are not statistically significant. The degree of association between the related factors mostly varied from low degree of association (Cramer’s \( V = 0.1 \) to 0.2) to moderate degree of association (Cramer’s \( V = 0.3 \)). However, in few cases, moderately strong degree of association, (Cramer’s \( V = 0.4 \) to 0.5) have been found. The following statistically significant relationships are found:

(i) Higher percentage male adolescents (84%) are informed of the stage of adolescence compared to female adolescents. Private school, especially those affiliated to CBSE and ICSE boards have addressed puberty more through textbooks and workshops compared to government, WBBSE schools. However, adolescents showed inhibition in identifying significant sexual changes associated with puberty because they lack in understanding of the full psycho-social implications of this stage due to incomplete sexuality education from caregivers.

(ii) Adolescent girls are found to be more aware (79%) of negative impacts of early marriage and pregnancy than boys (53%). Awareness and curiosity about menstruation is high among the respondents in contrast to the silence regarding nocturnal emission. All adolescent girls are aware of menstruation but 30% boys have no knowledge of nocturnal emission and reason for its occurrence. Association between gender and reproductive and sexual knowledge is moderately strong. One can locate the role of
patriarchy in its focus on the maturing female body. The boys also fall victim to this gender bias given that they remained ignorant of their own physical processes.

(iii) Majority of adolescent boys (96 %) affirmed their knowledge of relationships showing more confidence than girls because they experience less social constrains and prohibition to explore relationships. Girls remain restricted to close circle of family and kinship. Students from schools affiliated to CBSE and ICSE board have acquired better relationship skills than those from schools affiliated to WBBSE due the emphasis given on life skills by CBSE board and school counsellors present in some ICSE board schools. Adolescents valued committed relationships to unstable association but they failed to distinguish between emotions associated with sexual attraction, love and friendship. They are also found to be unaware of the exploitative and abusive dimensions of relationships.

(iv) Adolescents’ perception about sexual relationships and reproduction is restricted to intercourse, marriage, and pregnancy and their expressions of sexuality are delimited to romantic affairs, flirtations and bodily practices such as masturbation. Homosexuality is known but regarded as an unacceptable and abnormal tendency. Though statistically significant relationship does not exist, in terms of percentage, boys are found to be more knowledgeable about sexual relationship than girls. Students from ICSE and CBSE schools are also better informed about sexual relationship because their biology textbooks deal with it in details.

(v) It is found that adolescents catered to popular notions of masculinity and femininity yet at the same time supported strongly for gender equality. Few adolescents are found to be aware of the impacts of gender socialization. Adolescents belonging to CBSE schools are found to be more aware of gender issues given that these schools organized workshop on gender sensitization as a part of their Life Skills Education programmes.
Adolescent girls are found to identify gender inequality as they gain experience in their everyday living.

(vi) Adolescents showed a medium level of awareness regarding peer pressure; they could easily identify peer pressure but were incapable of refusing peers or handling unwanted pressure effectively. Bullying was acceptable within peer group and not acknowledged as a potentially damage inflicting activity. Gender does not emerge as a determining factor in this case given that almost equal percentages of both male and female adolescents affirmed knowledge of peer pressure.

(vii) Adolescents showed low level of awareness against sexual abuse. Majority of the respondents are found to be incapable of indentifying a ‘bad’ touch and they had no idea of protecting themselves from potential threat. Few adolescents had some information about extreme cases of sexual coercion such as rape from media. Parents were not regarded as reliable source providing help in such crisis situation. Adolescent girls are found to be more aware of sexual abuse given that caregivers provide required advice to potential female victims. Again in patriarchal system adolescents boys fall victim of ignorance, of the potential threat of sexual molestation. Students enrolled in ICSE and CBSE schools are more knowledgeable about finding help than those enrolled in WBBSE schools due to the presence of school counsellor.

(viii) Adolescents who are romantically involved and sexually active are found to be aware of method of contraception; in general an average number of adolescent are found to be aware of the consequences of risky sexual behaviour. Majority of the adolescents relied on their capability decision-making instead being following advices provided by parents. Male adolescents are found to be more aware of risky sexual behaviour than female adolescent respondents given that they are more sexually inclined than their female counterparts whose sexual behaviour are closely guarded. Students from ICSE and
CBSE schools are better capable of right decision-making than those enrolled in WBBSE schools.

(ix) Most adolescents showed low level of media skills as they approved of messages propagated by media in regard to body, sexuality and appearance. Many respondents found Internet pornography highly informative of adult sexual behaviour. Adolescents in CBSE board schools due to their exposure to life skills are found to be capable of proper reading of media content.

(x) Adolescents’ showed rudimentary level of awareness and moderately positive and cautious attitude towards sexuality education. Majority of adolescents disagreed that sexuality education is dangerous or unsuitable for them and supported its inclusion in schools. However, they are unsure of sexuality education’s contribution in improving their academic performances and their relationship with family and peer-group through associated life skills education. It is also found that though most respondent (47%) considered that sexuality education will instil proper attitude towards love, sex and sexuality yet a high percentage of adolescents (36%) are undecided whether or not sexuality education promote sex.

5. One-third of the sample of adolescents explored all possible sources of sexuality education. Girls are found to identify parents and teachers as primary sources whereas boys identified peer groups and media as primary sources of information. Girls have also used school texts for information more than boys. Girls being under more surveillance within patriarchal set up, they have less extended peer networks and lesser access to media and Internet. Also female adolescents on attaining puberty are bound to experience sexuality education from adult caregivers which is absent in case of male adolescents. Many adolescents also inform to have deal with sexuality through commonsensical understanding.
6. Adolescents’ reflections on sources of sexuality education are explored:

(i) Majority of adolescents found peer group approachable to communicate on personal issues; similar socio-cultural location and experiences made mutual understanding and subsequent sharing more conveniently but adolescents could also identify negative impacts of peer pressure.

(ii) Few television programmes are rated positively by adolescents as they depicted real life event creating awareness regarding relationship issues and social issues. In general adolescents did not find media as reliable sources of information. They also questioned the explicit unrealistic visual projection of media.

(iii) Parents-adolescents communication and sharing is found to be a complicated zone characterized by contradictory elements. In general adolescents are found to communicate more with their mother than with their father; the mother occupying a more informal position than father who is the formal head of the family. Same sex communication is also located that is girls are more comfortable with mothers whereas boys tend to open up more to their father. In general adolescents find sharing with parents problematic because they feel parents do not completely trust them and are prone to misunderstand them. They also find parental surveillance offensive. Parental emphasis on morality, values and sexual abstinence broadens generation gap and parents’ inability to give time and attention to adolescents also create distance between them.

(iv) Only few adolescents found Life Style classes and Life Skills classes informative and relevant. Many failed to understand the approach of life skills education and confused it with moral education. Adolescents found school authorities highly orthodox.
(v) Only 28% adolescent respondents reported to have communicated with their teachers in comparison to 53% who have not found it easy to share with them. Few adolescents improved their communication skills with the help of educators.

7. Adolescents’ suggested few steps for a more effective sexuality education programme.

(i) Adolescents suggested involvement of parents and teachers as sexuality educators as majority (65%) found them most reliable, trustworthy and dependable sources of information compared to peer-group and mass media. Parents’ involvement as sexuality educator is believed to develop their understanding and increase their rapport with the adolescents. However, adolescents preferred training and inclusion of teachers more than parents because of their formal position and expertise.

(ii) Learners also seem to prefer involvement of experts and counsellors in sexuality education programme because of their professional expertise. About 32% of adolescents thought that sexuality education provided by skilled personnel can lead them to a more secured life.

(iii) Around 56% of adolescent respondents are positive about peer-based learning in sexuality education classes where trained school students would act as sources of sexuality information for other students.