SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter summarize the entire research work and making conclusions about the study. At the end, this chapter present the policy implications.

In many cultures in the world including Indian culture the term ‘Sexuality’ is shrouded with secrecy and shame. The culture, morals and tradition are cited as reasons for the deafening silence. However, in recent times, academics and activists in the gender and human rights fields have begun to incorporate sexuality issues into their work. Researchers, advocates, counsellors and health service providers have also begun to consider sexual well-being as an important determinant of human welfare. In order to achieve the sexual well-being, it is necessary to offer comprehensive sexuality education to the young population. Document evidences also suggested that there has been a strong international commitment to promoting the provision of comprehensive sexuality education among young people. It is strongly believed that the comprehensive sexuality education is the cornerstone of improving the SRH of young people. In order to make healthy, responsible decisions, young people need accurate information about puberty, reproduction, relationships, sexuality, the consequences of unsafe sex, and how to avoid HIV, STIs and unintended pregnancy. They also need the skills and confidence to be able to deal with peer pressure and negotiate safe and consensual relationships.

With the view to generate awareness and inculcate necessary skills among adolescents and youth, a scheme for adolescent education programme in the
school curriculum was promoted in 2007 by the National AIDS Control Organization and the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, which led to a major controversy in the country. The ardent opponents argued for a ban on starting sex education in schools on the ground that it corrupts the youth and offends ‘Indian values’. The critics also suggested that sex education may be indispensable in western countries, but not in India which has a rich cultural traditions and ethos. On the contrary, the proponents argued that conservative ideas have little place in a fast modernizing society like India, where attitudes towards sex education are changing rapidly.

Under this scenario the study titled **Sexuality and Sexual education: Perception and attitude study among Parents in Tamil Nadu** was undertaken in five districts of Tamil Nadu state to understand the parents’ perception and attitude towards sexuality and sexuality education programme with the following specific objectives

- to study socio-cultural, economic and demographic conditions of study population
- to assess the parents’ religious commitment
- to explore parent’s perception towards gender and sexuality
- to investigate parent’s attitude towards sexuality
- to examine parents’ attitude about their children’s permissible sexual behaviour
- to examine parent’s understanding about sexuality education programme
- to study parent’s attitude towards sexuality education programme
- to study parent’s opinion towards themes of sexuality education curriculum
- to assess the influence of parents’ background condition on awareness and attitude towards sexuality issues and sexuality education programme
- to investigate the influence of parents’ religiosity on their awareness and attitudes towards sexuality education and its course content
Data for this study is basically collected from the respondents by field survey during 2016. In order to cover entire Tamil Nadu state, it is proposed to select one district from each of the five geographical division. The simple random method was applied to select one district from each of the geographical divisions. Trichy, Kancheepuram, Thirunelvelli, Cuddalore and Dharmapuri were selected as study districts. It is intended to select half number of the taluks from each of the selected districts by the lottery method. Totally 22 taluks were selected from all the selected 5 districts. In order to represent the rural and urban locations, the purposive sample method was adopted to select one urban/one rural area from each of the 22 taluks as sample study locations. As a first step in the selection of study population, house listing was conducted to identify the ever married couples living with at least one child in the age group of 13-19 years. Totally 1960 households were indentified in 11 urban locations (towns) and it was decided to select one-fifth of the respondents from each of the urban locations. Total number of respondents who cooperate and completed the entire interview episode was 303 at the urban area. A similar method was applied to select the rural households. Totally 226 rural households’ respondents were cooperate and completed the entire interview episode. Therefore the total sample size is 529.

**Socio-economic and demographic profile of the study population:** The sample population was dominated by females. Of the total 529 respondents who interviewed in the study locations, 212 of them males and the remaining 317 respondents were females. The male respondents slightly aged (42.07 years) than the female respondents (38.15 years) - the mean age of the study population was 39.72 years. It is inferred that the study was conducted among the middle-
aged adults. The rural and urban representation was well administrated by selecting samples from the respective locations however the urban residents were slightly dominated than the rural residents. Nuclear family system is a dominated family structure in the study area. This emerging nuclear family system among the study population may be due to the wake of new socio-economic progress in the study state. The sample population was dominated by Hindus and the lowest proportion was shared by the Forward Caste population. Overwhelming majority of the respondents were literates, however just thirty percent of them holding the Diploma or Degree. The average monthly income of the study population was about Rs.16,052/- and the mean monthly expenditure was Rs. 11,977/-. A considerable proportion of respondents living with good housing conditions in the study area. The average age at marriage for female respondent was 20.02 years which is slightly lesser than national average (21.2 years). The mean age at marriage for the male was 26.39 years which is higher than national average (23.5 years). Data on media exposure index reveals that around 37 percent of the respondents in the study area highly exposed to mass media and almost similar proportion had less exposure to mass media. Sex wise media exposure analysis shows a wide gap with respect to proportion of respondents in the highly exposed category. Overall, the socio-economic conditions of the study population reflects or exactly represent the state population of Tamil Nadu.

**Gender Perception:** In the study area, about half of the both male and female respondents acknowledged that 'educating boys is more important than educating girls'. It reflects the fact that the respondents are living in the male-
centred society. It is also observed that the female respondents themselves allow the male to dominate in the household management activities. Regarding decision on when the girls want to marry, majority of the male respondents not allow the females to exercise their rights. It is also quite surprising to note that the females themselves were against the women’s right with regard to their freedom of chance to marry. Level of gender preconception index was developed based on gender based statements. Based on the respondent’s response favour to male preconception with each of the statements the composite index was constructed. Data shows that out of the 212 male respondents, 17 percent of them had less male-centred opinion and 13 percent of the male respondents was highly male preconceived opinion. On contrast, of the total 317 female respondents, just 9 percent of them highly favoured to male preconceived opinion. Overall in the study locations, gender bias – favour to male was more, valued by the male respondents than the female respondents.

**Religiosity Status:** A set of 30 questions were framed in different headings such as religious involvement, religiousness, religious believe, religious hope, religious commitment, religious association, religious influence to assess the respondents’ level of religiosity in the study locations.

**Religious involvement:** With respect to religious involvement index, majority of respondents get associated with religious activities in the study area or majority of them were religiosity personnel. It is observed that a higher proportion of Muslim respondents were more religious personnel than the Hindus and Christians.
**Religiousness:** Data reveals that Muslim religious values played a major role in deciding their dress code and their consumption of food and drinks than the Hindus and Christians. A significant proportion of Muslim stated that their association with other religious people was determined by their religious value. Muslim respondents’ day-to-day affairs were highly influenced by their religious beliefs than the counterparts.

**Religiosity:** Religiosity index was developed based on 25 statements relating to religious hope, religious believes, religious commitments, religious association and religious influence statements. In the study area, a marginal proportion of respondents committed more to their religious values. It is noticed from the analysis that the male respondents, urban residents, Muslims, Forward Class respondents, high income group people, more media exposed and highly qualified respondents have more religious affiliation than the counterparts.

**Perception and attitude towards Sexuality:** In the study area, little above three-fourth of the parents believed that their children were in need of adolescence information and another two-third of the parents opinionated that their children were facing with some adolescence issues. It is obvious from these investigation results that the respondents in the study area were closely watching their children.

At the same time, a strong hesitation was prevailed among parents with regard to discussion on sexual issues with their children. It is evident that their understanding about legal issues was poor specifically with related to legal marriage age. The index on understanding on sexuality reveals that little above
one-fifth of the respondents had high level of understanding on sexuality. However a significant proportion of the respondents fall in the moderate level of understanding category (53.7 percent). It indicates that a notable proportion of respondents in the study location had better awareness about the sexuality.

The aged respondents’ understanding on sexuality was comparatively low when compare to young age respondents. A marginal difference was noticed between male and female respondents with respect to their level of understanding on sexuality. Urban residents, degree/ diploma holders and highly media exposed respondents had better awareness on sexuality than the counterparts. Muslim respondents’ understanding on sexuality was very poor when compare to Christians and Hindus. It is interesting to note that FC people and high income group people were poorly understood about sexuality than the counterparts.

In the study area, about sixty percent of the respondents stated that their parents never discussed about the body changes with them when they were teenager. At the same time more than half of the respondents discussed these issues with their children. It clearly indicates a transform in the mindset of the parents with respect to sexuality matters.

Parents’ perception and attitude towards their children behaviour at adolescence period: The parents’ attitude always favours to their male children than the female children for many of their behavior. Otherwise it can be stated that gender inequity is exits in the study area – majority of the respondents favour to the male children’s behaviour specifically with their opposite sex.
Parents’ perception and attitude towards sexuality/sexual relationships of their children: Of the total 529 respondents, around one-fifth of respondents had low level of perception on sexuality/sexual relationship and little above one-fourth of the respondents in the study area had high level of perception on sexuality/sexual relationship. Overall, the analysis indicates that the study population needs to be educated about sexuality issues very particularly about sexual relationship. The association between the respondents’ socio-economic and demographic conditions and their level of perception about sexuality/sexual relationship reveals that the young, urban residents, females, Christians and highly exposed to mass media persons had better understanding about the sexual relationship than the respective counterparts. The FC respondents and high income group people were less understand about the sexual relationship than their counterparts. It is interesting to note that when the respondents’ level of religiosity increases their perception on sexuality/sexual relationship was decreased.

Parent attitudes towards permissible sexual behaviour of their adolescent children: Majority of the parents know about their children’s friends especially the opposite sex friendships. It shows that the parents are closely associated or well communicated or watching their children. It is also interesting to observe that irrespective of sex of the children, more than eighty percent of the parents were approved their children’s opposite sex association. The parents had strong opinion that the married people should engaged in sexual act and not by the unmarried persons. At the same time little more than one-third of the parents stated that engaging in sexual act before marriage is not against their values.
In general, many research studies proved that parents feel discomfort to discuss sexuality related issues with their children and they may not have adequate and accurate information on these issues. But in the study locations the parents were very comfortable in sexual debate with their children. Overall it can be concluded that the discussion on sexual matters with their children, irrespective of their sex, parents were very comfortable. It reflects the social changes which undergoing in the society.

Data on dating practice system reveals that there were many rules framed in the study population society, hence the dating is not practiced freely among the study population. The religiosity indices show a positive association between the respondents’ religiosity and their opinion on dating rules. The high religious committed respondents always had the opinion that they follow many rules with respect to dating practices.

**Parents’ perception and attitude towards Sexuality education:** Among the study population the term Family Life Education was not much popular because only little above half of the sample population ever heard about the phrase family life education and the major source for their familiarity on FLE was other than the school. In the study area, old age respondents, females, rural residents, Christians, FC people, educated respondents, high income group people, working in private sector people and highly media exposed people were much familiar with the term family life education than the respective counterparts. Another interesting finding from the religiosity analysis that the respondent’s degree of religiosity have a negative impact on the respondent’s familiarity on family life education. The respondents’ level of religiosity increases their
awareness about family life education was decreases. The logistic regression analysis results show that the background variables such as sex, religion, educational status, mass media exposure, religious involvement and level of sexuality understanding had a strong effect on awareness of FLE in the study locations.

Opinion to introduce FLE for students: Many research studies found that myths and misconceptions about sexuality issues are abound in India and Indian culture not allows having public discourse on sexuality. However, in the study area about eighty percent of the study population (420 respondents) had the opinion to introduce the family life education to the students. It indicates the hesitation against the sexuality education is decline in the society it may be due to the wake of new socio-cultural progress. Irrespective of the respondents’ socio-economic and demographic conditions majority of respondents in the study area had the opinion that it is necessary to have sexuality education for students. More specifically the young population, female respondents, rural residents, Hindu and Christian respondents and low income group people had more positive attitude to provide sexuality education for the students than their respective counterparts.

The analysis on effect of respondents’ degree of religiosity on respondents’ opinion towards to offer of family life education for students shows that while respondents’ level of religious involvement increases, their opinion to provide the family life education was decreases. It can be proved from the results that the respondent’s degree of religiosity have an optimistic influence on
opinion to offer sexuality education for students. It indicates the hold of religiosity values on implementation of sexuality education.

On the other hand while the respondents' understanding on sexuality increases, their acceptance towards sexuality education for the students was increases. Similarly when the respondents' perception on sexuality relationship increases their approval of sexuality education for the students was also increases. It indicates that if the parents understand the sexuality properly – have adequate and accurate information on these issues, they undoubtedly approve the sexuality education for students.

It is clearly evident from the logistic regression analysis on approval or acceptance of sexuality education that socio-economic and demographic variable not have any strong influence on acceptance of sexuality education in the study locations. But at the same time degree of religiosity of the respondents have shown a statistical association with the acceptance of sexuality education.

**Perception towards Sexuality Education:** Of the total 529 respondents, 420 respondents had the opinion that sexuality education should provide to students however only 251 respondents agreed to teach sexuality education at schools. More than half of the respondents believed that providing sexuality education will help them to become responsible adults. Majority of them not had clear idea about to teach the functions of sex organs to the students. Only a marginal proportion of respondents understood that the sexuality education refers not only to sexual behaviour. A significant proportion of respondents stated that the sexuality education should not teach in a separate class and at the same time a
significant proportion of respondents had the perception that sexuality education class should not be a combination of boys and girls in one class. By and large, more than half of the respondents in the study locations had inaccurate knowledge or little confused state over the sexuality education. The composite index on understanding about sexuality education also obviously indicates that the study population had poor understanding on sexuality education. The analysis indicates that among the study population, the young respondents, respondents live in nuclear type, females, Hindus, degree/diploma holders, high income group people, respondent’s working in private/public sectors and highly media exposed respondents were little more understanding about sexuality education than the respective counterparts. Again the degree of religiosity is proved a negative impact on the respondent’s perception on sexuality education/family life education.

**Parents’ perception on Sexuality education curriculum contents:** Totally 34 different themes/topics were presented to the respondents to give opinion to induct in the sexuality education curriculum. The 420 respondents who agreed to induct the sexuality education at school alone considered for this analysis. These 34 topics were grouped into three groups such as Social values and relationship, Adolescence period’s changes and issues and Protection/precaution issues

**Social values and relationship:** Among the seven listed ‘Social values and relationship’ related topics, majority of them accepted to teach the ‘Social relationship’ in the sexuality education programme. The themes on ‘Family/individual values and moral beliefs on sexuality’ and ‘Values of sexual abstinence until marriage’ were the least preferred topics among the ‘Social
values and relationship’ related topics. The composite index data reveals that just 8 percent of the respondents completely disapproved all the seven themes to include in the sexuality education curriculum. It indicates that the respondents have keen interest to induct Social values and relationship themes in the sexuality education curriculum.

**Adolescence period’s changes and issues:** Totally 10 themes were listed under the ‘Adolescence period’s changes and issue’. Majority of the respondents accepted to teach ‘Emotional developments’ in the sexuality education programme. The next highest proportion of respondents approved the ‘Physical, Emotional and Psychological changes during Puberty’ as an important theme to include in the sexuality curriculum. Significant proportions of the respondents approved the remaining the listed topics, however, the topics ‘Ejaculation and wet dreams’ and ‘Masturbation’ were listed as least preferred topics. The composite index data discloses that little less than half of the respondents completely agreed to accept all the 17 themes to include in the sexuality curriculum and at the same time around 9 percent of the study populations completely disagree with these themes.

**Protection/precaution issues:** Majority of the study population indicated the HIV/AIDS related topics as the main theme to include in the sexuality education curriculum under the ‘Protection/precaution issues’. The topic ‘how to deal with pressure to have sex’ was listed as least priority topic to include in the sexuality education programme. It is evident from the composite index data that around 9 percent of the study populations completely disagree with these themes.
It is very obvious from the analysis that the parents given priority to teach social values and relationship topics, then to the topics concern with adolescence issues and to the precaution and prevention topics in the study area. It can be concluded that overwhelming majority of the respondents either totally or partially agreed to all the 34 sexuality related themes to include in the sexuality education curriculum.

Parents’ attitude towards teaching of Sexuality education: Of the 420 parents who agreed to teach sexuality education for students more than two-thirds of the parents agreed to teach the sexuality education as a compulsory subject in the school and majority stated that it should teach at their middle level of schooling or at their earlier adolescence period. More than sixty percent of the parents believed that sexuality education will be a platform to provide correct and factual information to school students on sexual health and relationship. At the same time a notable proportion stated that sexuality education should teach secretly and they didn’t have any concrete idea about the person by whom it should be delivered. It can be observed form the analysis that the parents have little confusion or not had any pertinent idea to propose the exact subject in which the sexuality education contents to be included.

Sum up: This study finds very encouraging result that majority of the respondents agreed to offer sexuality education for their children. They also approved almost all the contents listed to them. They identified that the schools are right place to offer the sexuality education however they don’t have any clear idea about in which subject and in which standard it should be teach.
In addition, they strongly believed that provision of accurate information about sexuality through sexuality education programs in educational institutions helps their children in understanding their sexuality, sexual desires, sexual orientation, and gender identity and to make responsible decisions about their relationships to become healthy sexual beings.

Recommendation

Young people have the right to lead healthy lives. Hence country needs to provide young people with honest, age-appropriate information they need to live healthy lives and build healthy relationships and young people need to take personal responsibility for their health and well being. In line with, the following recommendations are proposed based on the findings of the study.

- Conducive environments should be created to promote debates on the importance and benefits of sexuality education across the country
- The government and civil society should initiate a national debate to arrive at a consensus on this issue among various sections of the society
- There is an obvious and urgent need for in-depth research across India on induction of sexuality education that yields accurate information concerning the challenges of sexuality education in schools
- It should be age appropriate and culturally sensitive keeping with the current SRHR needs of young people
- Sexuality education should be scientifically sound, sensible and adaptable
- It should include the basic principles of equality and equity
- Trained educators may be better equipped to deal with sensitive issues like sexuality
This study strongly emphasises the necessity to formulate appropriate policy regarding family life education so as to address the unmet need for scientific learning on matters of sexual life among youth.

There is a strong unmet need for sexuality education in the study locations and the majority of the parents who participated in this study irrespective of their socio-economic background have favoured the introduction of sexuality education. Hence, this study recommended to implement sexuality education in secondary and higher secondary schools.