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Need Assessment for Sex Education amongst the University Students –A Pilot Study

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ABSTRACT

Background: The morbidity associated with sexual ignorance, poor decision making and inadequate sexuality education is rising in India day by day. The possibility of sex related public health problems like sexual abuse, teenage pregnancies, abortions, unmarried motherhood, STD/HIV infections etc. are always remains high in university students. In this background to assess the student's knowledge & perceived need for sex education this study was conducted. **Objective Of Study:** To assess the need of sex education in students To explore the views of students on content, source & preferred grade levels of education for sex education. **Methods:** It was a cross-sectional study conducted among students of Panjab University, Chandigarh. Sample size was 86 (Boys=45, Girls=41). A pre-tested questionnaire was used to collect information from the respondents. The results were calculated in percentage. **Results:** 95% of students were in favors of mainstreaming of sex education. 76.74% students choose the teacher as the best source to provide sex education. Students preferred grade levels to start sex education was matriculation with curriculum containing the information on sexual body changes during growth, contraceptives and sexually transmitted diseases. **Conclusions:** Majority of students has received sex information from informal sources and they are not satisfied with their knowledge on sex education. Majority of them supports the implementation of sex education in educational institutes. The government needs to make sex education mandatory as well as plan the educational material in a way that incites not libidinous behavior but instills mature decision making skills in the students.

KEY WORDS- Sex Education, Pilot Study.

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Introduction

India - the country that gave the world the Kama Sutra - still hesitates to talk about sex openly in the 21st Century. Indians have a rather regressive attitude about sex education, be it in schools or our homes. Shockingly, for one of the most populated nation in the world sex and sex education is still a taboo. Imparting sex-education in the schools of India has remained a debatable issue. While many believe that it should be taken up in schools, others feel that being a delicate subject, parents should deal with their children in this regard. The children of the 21st Century are much better informed than what their parents were at the

same age, courtesy—the mass media. An interesting debate has been going on in the country (India) for some time now on the proposal to introduce sex education in schools.²

While dealing with a Public Interest Litigation filled by NGO, Nari Raksha Samiti in 2003, submitted that sex education in school curricula could play a role in checking the rise in rape cases and suggested making sex education in schools compulsory, the Supreme Court had given a judgment on 16 November, 2005 decided that sex education in schools cannot be brought under the ambit of fundamental rights by making it a part of the right to education. "We cannot

make it (sex education) a fundamental right," a bench comprising Justice Ruma Pal and Justice A R Lakshmanan said. Though agreeing with the suggestion, the bench said it cannot be given the status of a fundamental right on the same footing as the right to education itself.^{3,4}

The Union Human Resources Development (HRD) Ministry has launched, in 2005 collaboration with the National Aids Control Organisation (NACO), an educational programme known as the Adolescence Education Programme (AEP), (popularly known as 'sex education'), intended to be implemented by all the States and the Union Territories. The vowed aim of the AEP is to 'protect the secondary and senior secondary school students in the age group of 15-17 from AIDS and exposure to drugs' as well as the physical and mental development of 14-18-year-olds. It is not that the AEP teaches the students about sexual intercourse or the methods of it but it seeks to 'empower the adolescent population to make informed choices and develop life skills for addressing psychological, social and health concerns', as has been emphasized by the HRD Ministry. Mean while, a parliamentary committee on petitions rejected the new education program proposed by the Ministry of Human Resource Development. The Committee has said there should be no sex education in schools because it promotes promiscuity and India's "social and cultural ethos are such that sex education has absolutely no place in it." The Committee said that it was "highly embarrassed" by the HRD ministry's curriculum and insisted that pre-marital sex, together with sex outside marriage, is "immoral, unethical and unhealthy". It also said that consensual sex before the age of 16 "amounts to rape". India's "social and cultural ethos are such that sex education has absolutely no place in it", the committee huffed. Naturopathy and Ayurveda should be taught instead.⁵

On the other side emergence of AIDS has focused everybody's attention towards the role of sex education. AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are common today, but many parents, teachers and student do not understand these diseases and their prevention. Young people for a variety of reasons such as developmental issues, peer pressure, social influences etc are becoming sexually active at earlier ages ever than before. However, this early sexually activities is often not accompanied by knowledge about its consequences.¹

The morbidity associated with sexual ignorance, poor decision making and inadequate sexuality education is rising in India day by day. The possibility of sex related public health problems like sexual abuse,

teenage pregnancies, abortions, unmarried motherhood, STD/HIV infections etc. are always remains high in university students. Sex education has always been a controversial issue India.

Significance of the Study: The central government realizing the importance of sex education has tried to implement it in the school curriculum. India's states Panjab, Gujarat ,Madhya Pradesh , Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh states have banned the introduction of sex education in schools .² The move is being seen as a setback to central government efforts to introduce sex education in schools countrywide. In this background to assess the student's knowledge & perceived need for sex education this study was conducted.

Purpose /Objective of Study: To assess the need of sex education in students To explore the views of students on content, source & preferred grade levels of education for sex education

Material and Methods

It was a questionnaires based study.

Population and sampling: - Panjab university campus, Students of Panjab university

Sample size:-86 (Boys=45, Girls=41)

Instrumentation: - Self structured Questionnaire
Procedure and time frame: -

A questionnaire was developed to assess the information from respondents. This questionnaire contains questions on means of sex education, available source of sex education, institutional sex education received, source from which they received sex education, knowledge about STD/HIV/AIDS, knowledge about methods of family planning, satisfaction from sex education received and quality of currently available sex education , source from which they preferred to receive sex education, need of sex education, need of intimation to parent preferred grade levels of education to start sex education, type of information included under sex education, who needs sex education,different arrangement for girls than it is for boys, view on media's focus and increasingly main stream on sex, reason behind the protest of political parties against the sex education in school in India. After taking the consents of students the questionnaires were distributed to them and fulfilled questionnaires were collected in next day and percentages of results were calculated.

Analysais plan: -Parentage was calculated.

ResultsThe age of respondents lies between the 17 -33 years. Sample size contains almost equal ratio of girls and boys i.e. (Boys=45, Girls=41).

Perception of the need for sex education, preferred grade level and its contents

Both girls and boys feel strong need of sex education to the students. Matriculation followed by pre-matriculation was the chosen preferred grade levels to start sex education.

Table: 1-Perception of the need for sex education and preferred grade level

Need of Sex education	Boys(n=45)	Girls(n=39)
Yes	40 (88.90)	38 (97.40)
No	5 (11.10)	1 (2.60)
Preferred grade levels of education to start sex education	Boys(n=37)	Girls(n=40)
Pre-matriculation	5(13.51)	15 (37.50)
Matriculation	22 (59.45)	14(35.00)
Graduation	9(24.32)	8 (20.00)
Post Graduation	1 (2.70)	3(7.50)

Figures in parentheses represents percentages

Majority (69.76%) of students views sex education as information about modes of getting HIV/AIDS/STDs including their transmission and treatment. Methods to reduce the risk of HIV infections, HIV transmission and public health issues associated with HIV/AIDS were their preferred contents for HIV/AIDS prevention instructions. The students want to include the information's on sexual body changes during growth, contraceptives and sexually transmitted diseases under comprehensive sex education programmes.

Table:2- Preferred Contents of Future Sex Education Curriculum

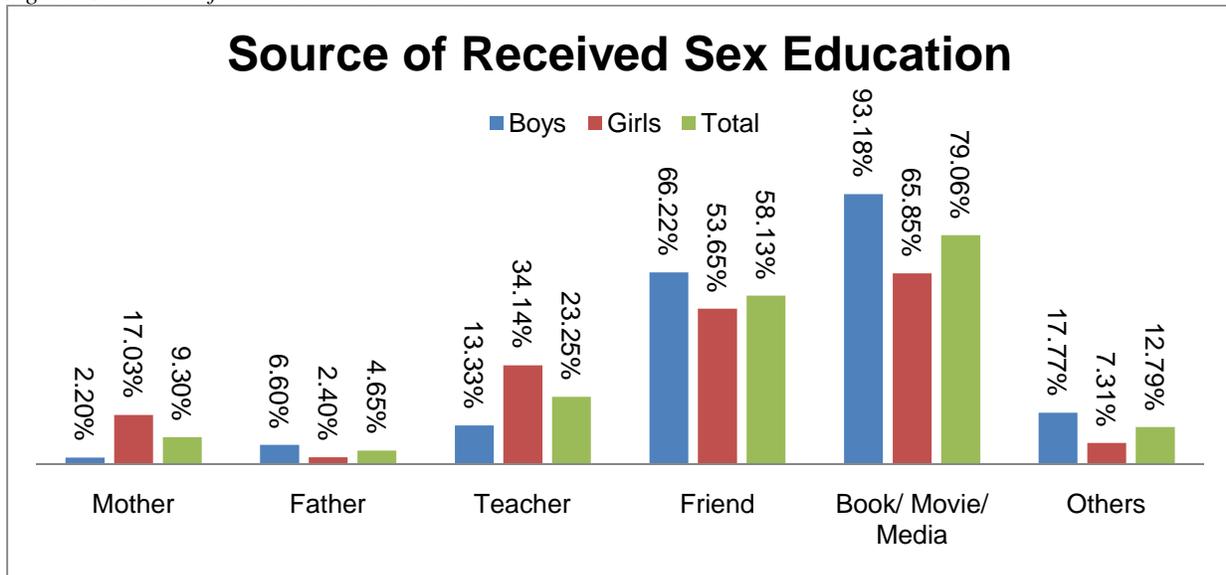
Contents to include in comprehensive sex health education*	Boys(n=44)	Girls(n=40)
Sexual body changes in adolescent age	38(86.36)	35(87.50)
The effectiveness and safety of all methods reducing the risk of contracting STDs	36 (81.81)	25(62.50)
The effectiveness and safety of all contraceptive methods	32(72.72)	23 (57.50)
STDs, including their transmission, treatment, and prevention	37(84.09)	32(80)
Contents to include in HIV/AIDS prevention instructions*	Boys(n=45)	Girls(n=39)
The nature of HIV/AIDS and its effects on the body	26 (57.77)	31(79.48)
HIV transmission	32 (71.11)	28 (71.79)
Methods to reduce the risk of HIV infection	36 (80)	30 (76.92)
Public health issues associated with HIV/AIDS	30 (66.66)	27(69.23)

*Figures in parentheses represents percentages *Multiple Responses*

Source of Sex Education

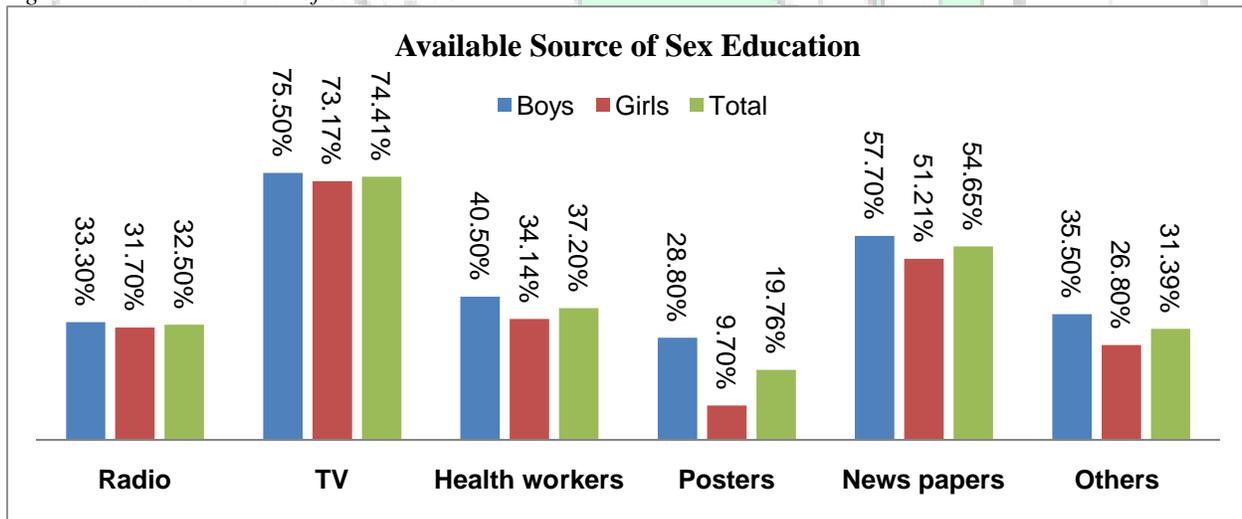
- a. *Source of Sex Education Received*-Majority of students (70.60%) had received sex education from informal sources i.e. they did not receive any institutional sex education. Book/movie/media and friends are comes out as the main sources from which they received sex education. Only 26.50% of students were found satisfied from sex education they received.

Figure: 1- Source of received sex education



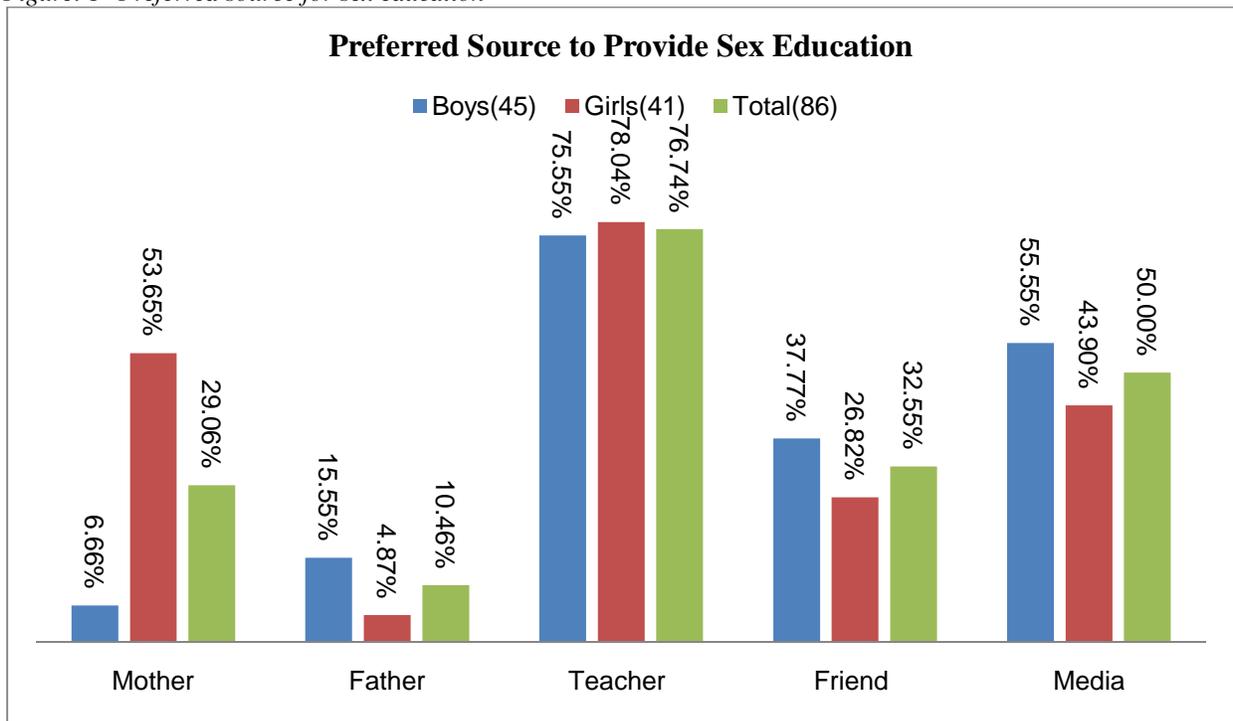
- b. *Available Source of Sex Education* -T.V and news paper are the most known available source of sex education according to students. Only 8.30% students were found satisfied from the quality of available sex education.

Figure: 2- Available source of sex education



- c. *Preferred Source for Sex Education*- Majority of students (76.74%) chooses the teacher as the best source to provide sex education.

Figure: 3- Preferred source for sex education

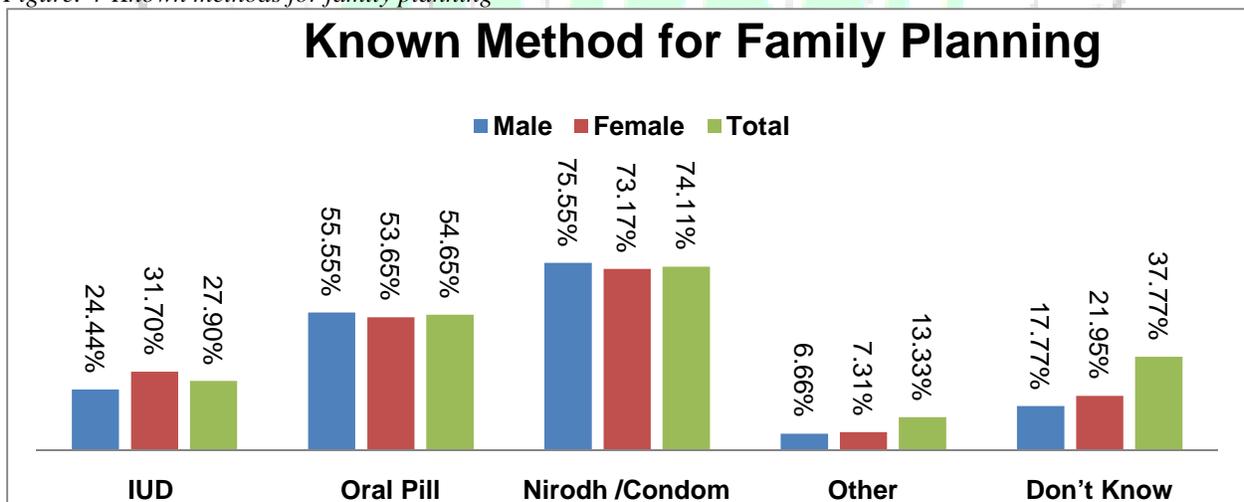


According to 60% of students, sex education should not treat differently for girls and boys. 83% of students think information about providing sex education in educational institutes should be given to the parents.

Sex Education Knowledge

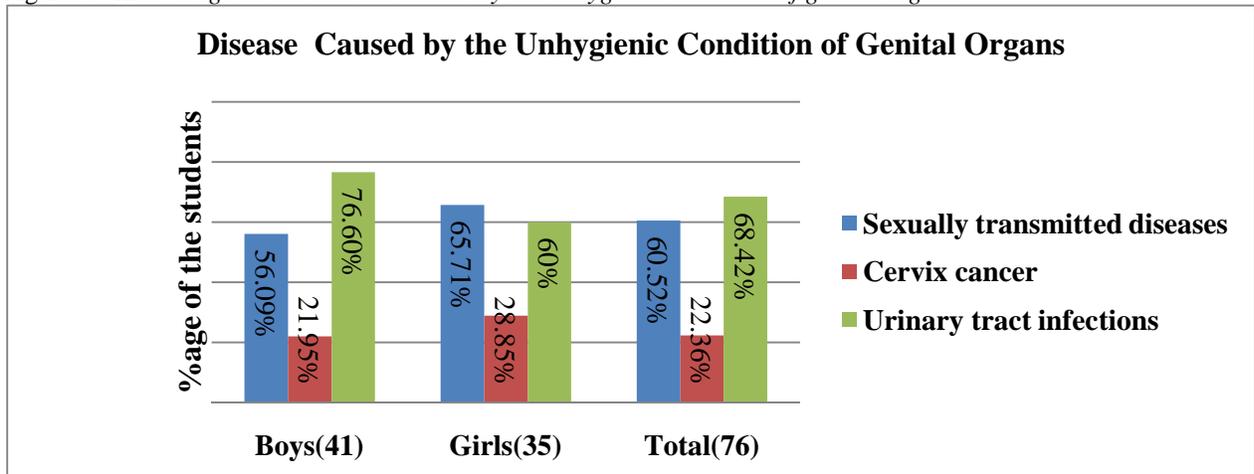
On assessment of their knowledge level, it was found that majority (70.90%) of students were not found aware about the location of HIV/AIDS/STD/Sex counseling centre but a major portion of them was found fully aware about the source /modes of getting HIV/AIDS. 69.50% of students were aware about the family planning methods. Nirodh/Condom was comes out as most known method of family planning between the respondents.

Figure: 4- Known methods for family planning



The majority of students have knowledge about the diseases associated with unhygienic conditions of genital organs.

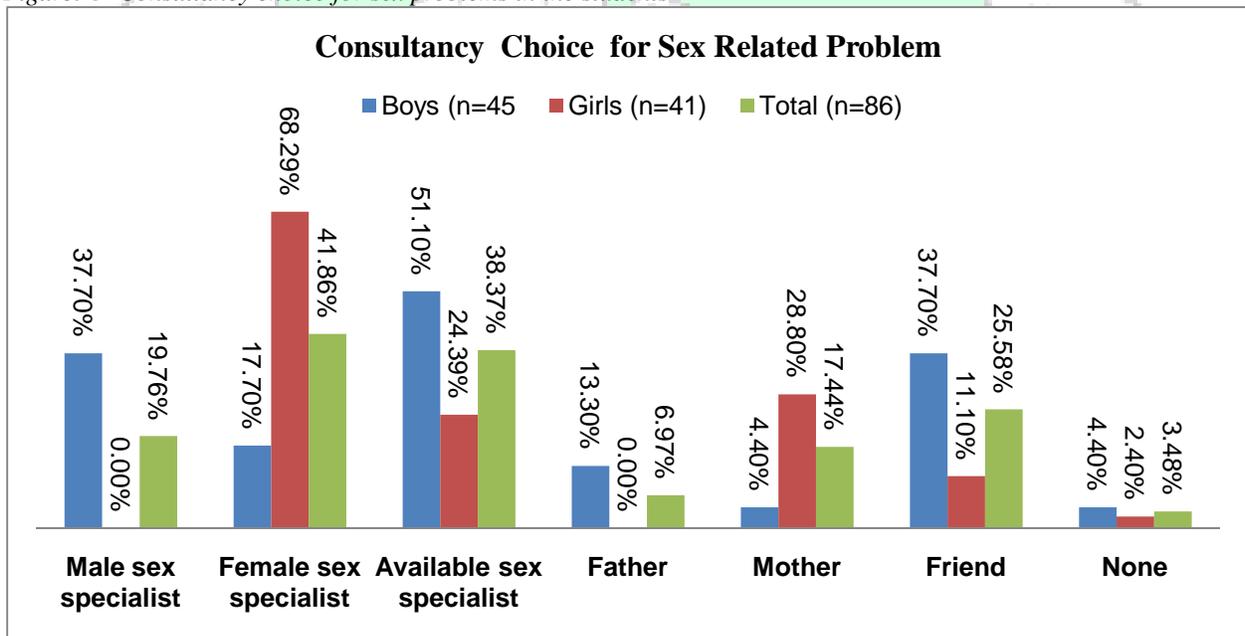
Figure: 5- Knowledge on the disease caused by the unhygienic condition of genital organs



Attitude towards Sex Problems

In case of sex related problems, the girl students give preference to female sex specialist whereas the boys had given to available sex specialist to get consultation about sex problems.

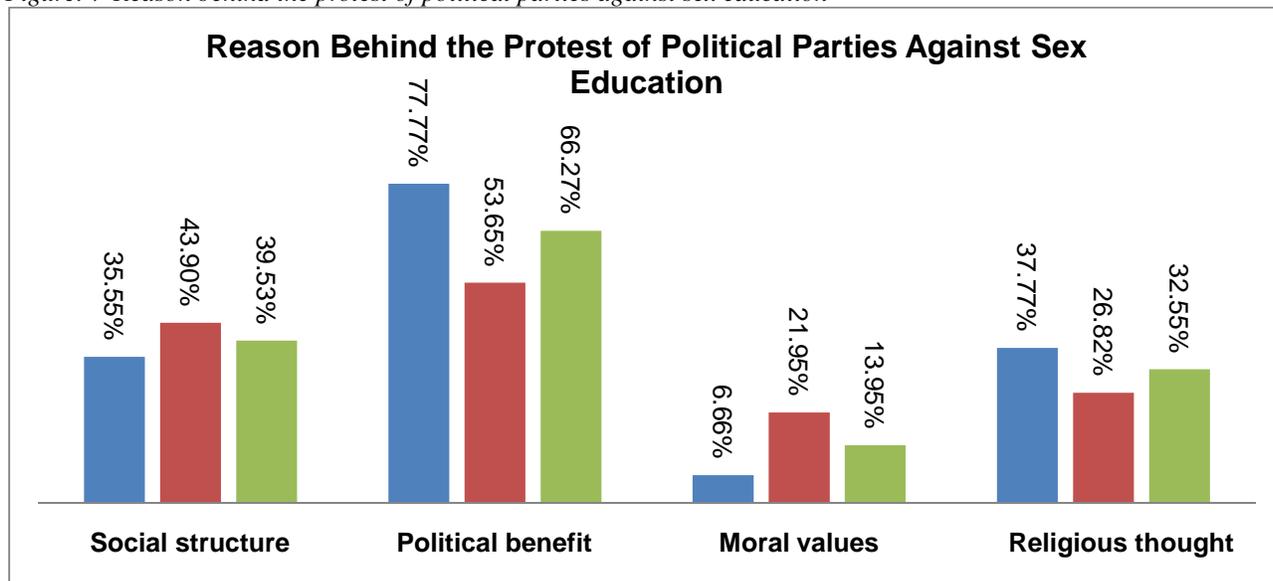
Figure: 6- Consultancy choice for sex problems in the students



Attitude towards mainstreaming of sex education and its political protest

95% of students were in favors of mainstreaming of sex education and 66.27% of students think that the protest of political parties is motivated from political benefits. Social structures and religious thought are another two main reason apart from political benefits.

Figure: 7-Reason behind the protest of political parties against sex education



Conclusion

Majority of students have received sex information from informal sources and they are not satisfied with their knowledge on sex education. Majority of them supports the implementation of sex education in educational institutes.

Recommendations: The government needs to make sex education mandatory as well as plan the educational material in a way that incites not libidinous behavior but instills mature decision making skills in the students. Inculcating sensible sexual attitudes is the key to successful sexual behavior. Schools should develop positive attitudes and ideologies of the Indian youth on reproductive health, emotional relations and reproductive rights and responsibilities. Efforts are also required to be made at educating the parents of the imperative need to provide better understanding and scientific knowledge to the teenaged with regard to sex - besides preparing the teaching fraternity mentally for the task. In order to achieve the desired results, the teachers should be specially trained for the purpose, with the emphasis on ethics and teen psychology. Otherwise there is the danger of the taught being exploited by some unscrupulous ones among the fraternity. The success of the programme, however, depends mainly on two aspects, i.e. the content and the methodology. It calls for utmost care in preparation of the content that is to be taught and exposed to the students. It should be carved out in such a manner as to make it interesting and dignified and not be obscene, even remotely.

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