

■ *Original Article*

## Adolescent students' attitude towards premarital sex and unwanted pregnancy

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### Abstract

**Background:** In Nepal, as in other Asian countries, the issue on sexuality still remains a taboo. Despite this, there are increasing numbers of sexual activities reported among Nepalese adolescents. **Objective:** To know the attitude towards premarital sex and unwanted pregnancy of adolescent students. **Methods:** Three higher secondary schools were randomly selected and students of those schools were taken purposively with structured self administered questionnaires. Cross-sectional study design was adopted and significance levels were observed with 95% confidence level ( $p < 0.05$  for significant). Descriptive and inferential analyses were done with the sample size 324. **Results:** Among the total respondents, 32.4% mentioned premarital sex is appropriate and 25% had premarital sex. One third (33.3%) of the total respondents' peers were taking alcohol, 37.7% had smoking habit and 8.3% had drug dependency. Among the respondents having experience of premarital sex, 61.7% had the first sex at the age of mean  $\pm$  SD  $17.72 \pm 0.849$  years. Among the boys 32.6% and among the girls 13.7% had the premarital sexual intercourse. Majority of boys and girls had first sex with girl friend and boy friend respectively. Among the total respondents who had premarital sex, 16% faced the problem of unwanted pregnancy. Among them, 53.8% managed the unwanted pregnancy by surgical abortion procedure and remaining 46.2% managed by taking medicine (medical abortion). **Conclusion:** Sexual and reproductive health of the adolescents is now growing concern for many developing countries due to increasing trend in sexual activities and unwanted pregnancies among the adolescents.

**Keywords:** adolescent, abortion, premarital sex, unwanted pregnancy

### Introduction

International Conference of Population and Development particularly addressed in helping adolescents to understand their sexuality and protect them from subsequent risks. Period of sexual maturity that transforms a child into a biologically mature and it's consequences of that sexual activity.<sup>1</sup>

In Nepal, the adolescent population was 5.4 million in 2001<sup>2</sup>. Sexually experienced adolescents are typically unaware of the consequences of unprotected sexual intercourse. Changes in social and economic factors including urbanization, industrialization and education have eliminated many of the traditional restraints on early sexual activity in turned increase the risks to their reproductive health and well-being.<sup>3-5</sup> In most of the Asian countries, sex and sexuality are very sensitive to talk and are hardly ever discussed.<sup>6</sup> UNICEF found that almost one in five boys and nearly one in 10 girls interviewed had had a premarital sexual experience.<sup>7</sup>

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## Methods

The study was conducted in Jhapa district, the eastern part of Nepal. This is a cross-sectional study undertaken among purposively selected 324 sample of plus two levels adolescent students from randomly selected three higher secondary schools. This study was accomplished in 2011. An informed consent was obtained from the participants and school management before enrollment. A short orientation about the topic and its objectives was provided prior to information collection.

An inclusion criterion was plus two level adolescent students. A structured self administered questionnaire was taken for data collection. The major variables in the questionnaire included the three key areas: viz; individual characteristics, peers characteristics and attitude on premarital sex and unwanted pregnancy.

Data was analyzed using SPSS for Windows, version 16. A descriptive statistical method was used to analyze the major outcome variables. The analysis was done with respect to the independent variable sex (boys and girls) and other variables. While sex wise analysis showed significant differences with respect to some of the dependent variables and no

significant difference was noted with the others. Associations between two variables were tested with the Chi-square test to compare rates among the categories. A p-value of <0.05 was considered statistical significance with 95 % confidence interval.

## Results

Out of three hundred and twenty four subjects were enrolled. Majority 58.6% belonged to the age group of 18-19 years and the remaining 41.4% belonged to the age group 16-17 years. 59.6% were boys and 40.4% were girls. The mean  $\pm$  SD age of the respondent was  $17.72 \pm 0.849$  years. With respect to age wise composition, there was significant difference ( $P < 0.05$ ) between boys and girls. Majority 86.1% of the respondent were Hindus, 9% were Buddhists, 2.8% Christians, and 1.9% Muslims.

More than one third (37.7%) said that their peers had smoking habit and among them 51.3% boys and 17.6% girls had smoking habit in their peers. Nearly half (44.0%) of boys and 17.6% girls had alcohol drinking habit in their peers. And 13.0% boys and 1.5% girls had drug using habit in their peers. There was highly significant relationship ( $P < 0.01$ ) between smoking, alcohol drinking, and drug using habit of their peers with the sex (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Smoking, alcohol drinking and drug using habit of peers

Smoking habit	Frequency (n=324)(%)		Total (p-value: 0.000)
	Male	Female	
Yes	99(51.3%)	23(17.6%)	122(37.7%)
No	94(48.7%)	108(82.4%)	202(62.3%)
<b>Alcohol habit</b>			<b>(p-value: 0.000)</b>
Yes	85(44.0%)	23(17.6%)	108(33.3%)
No	108(56.0%)	108(82.4%)	216(66.7%)
<b>Drug using habit</b>			<b>(p-value: 0.000)</b>
Yes	25(13.0%)	2(1.5%)	27(8.3%)
No	168(87.0%)	129(98.5%)	297(91.7%)

About the premarital sex nearly half of the respondents (45.1%) said that their peers had premarital sex experience. And 32.4% respondents mentioned that premarital sex is appropriate. Majority had mentioned either single or multiple responses about the appropriateness of premarital sex that the

main response “to satisfy sexual desire” was 48.8%, others “to take sexual experience” were 31.4% and “to keep close relation” was 29.5%. There was highly significant difference relationship ( $P < 0.01$ ) between boys and girls with respect to the appropriateness of premarital sex (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Appropriateness of premarital sex

Appropriateness	Frequency (n=324)(%)		Total (p-value: 0.000)
	Male	Female	
Yes	85 (44.0%)	20 (15.3%)	105 (32.4%)
No	108 (56.0%)	111 (84.7%)	219 (67.6%)

One fourth (25%) of the respondents had the premarital sexual intercourse. Among them, 32.6% among the boys and 13.7% among the girls had the premarital sexual intercourse. Statistically significant difference was observed between boys and girls with respect to the premarital sexual intercourse (Table 3). The mean  $\pm$  SD age of first sexual intercourse was  $16.85 \pm 1.026$  years.

**Table 3:** Premarital sexual intercourse by the respondents and age of first time sex

Premarital sexual intercourse	Frequency (n=324)(%)		Total (p-value: 0.000)
	Male	Female	
Yes	63 (32.6%)	18 (13.7%)	81 (25.0%)
No	130 (67.4%)	113 (86.3%)	243 (75.0%)
Age of first time sex	Frequency (n=81)(%)		Total
	Male	Female	
14-15	6 (9.5%)	3 (16.7%)	9 (11.1%)
16-17	38 (60.3%)	12 (66.7%)	50 (61.7%)
18-19	19 (30.2%)	3 (16.7%)	22 (27.2%)

Among the boys more than half (57.1%) and among the girls 55.6% had the first sexual intercourse with their girl friends and boy friends with respect and among the girls 33.3% and among boys 14.3% had first sexual intercourse with their relatives. Among the boys 14.3% and among the girls 5.6% had the first sex with sex workers and similarly with relatives (Table 4). More than half (69.1%) of the respondents shared their sexual experience with their best friend and 23.5% shared with their peers.

**Table 4:** Respondents first time sex with whom

First time sex with	Frequency (n= 81) (%)		Total
	Male	Female	
Girl friend	36(57.1%)	0(.0%)	36(44.4%)
Boy friend	0(.0%)	10(55.6%)	10(12.3%)
Relative	9(14.3%)	6(33.3%)	15(18.5%)
Sex worker	9(14.3%)	1(5.6%)	10(12.3%)
Neighbor	9(14.3%)	1(5.6%)	10(12.3%)

Majority 69.1% used the family planning method during their premarital sex. Among the boys 77.8% and among the girls 38.9% used the family planning method. Majority (84%) of the respondents, who had the premarital sex, did not face the problem after the sexual intercourse where as 16% faced the problem of unwanted pregnancy. Among the thirteen respondents (16%) who faced the problem of unwanted pregnancy after the sex more than half (53.8%) respondents managed the problem of unwanted pregnancy by surgical abortion and other 46.2% managed by medical abortion (using medicine) (Table 5).

**Table 5:** Problem faced and management of unwanted pregnancy

Problem faced	Frequency (n=81)		Total
	Respondent's Girl partner	Female Respondent	
Yes	10(16.0%)	3(17.0%)	13(16.0%)
No	53(84.0%)	15(83.0%)	68(84.0%)
Management of unwanted pregnancy	Frequency (n=13)		Total
	Respondent's Girl partner	Female Respondent	
Surgical Abortion	5(50.0%)	2(66.7%)	7(53.8%)
Medical Abortion (by using medicine)	5(50.0%)	1(33.3%)	6(46.2%)

## Discussion

The results shows that the urbanization and modern society have directly affect on the health and wellbeing of the adolescents ultimately would be the economic burden for the family and nation.

The result shows that more than one third respondents' peers had smoking habit and alcohol drinking habit respectively and 8.3% peers had drug using habit. In this study, nearly half of the respondents' peers had premarital sex experience and statistically significant relationships were found. The obtained results have shown that the peers characteristics were seem to be particularly relevant risk factors.

In the views of respondents 32.4% mentioned that premarital sex is appropriate. Both the boys and girls nearly half of main response for appropriateness was "to satisfy sexual desire".

In this study found that among the boys 32.6% and among the girls 13.7% had premarital sexual intercourse. These figures are not in agreement with the previous study in Bangladesh revealed 61% of boys as compare with 24% of girls had premarital sex.<sup>12</sup> In the Republic of Korea 24% boys and 11% girls were reported to have had premarital sex.<sup>10</sup>

In several studies have found that the adolescents premarital sex. In Nepal, the study conducted by CREPHA shows that 41% of adolescent aged 18-19 years were sexually active. Moreover, 77% had their first sexual contact below the 19 years and the mean age of first sexual contact was 17.9 years.<sup>14</sup> In the village of Nepal one in ten boys of age 15-19 are sexually active<sup>8</sup> and Bhuiya and colleagues study in Bangladesh shows that 9% boys and 3% girls ages 13-19 had premarital sex.<sup>13</sup> In our study 25.0% had the premarital sex and majority of them 61.7% had the first sexual intercourse at the age of 16-17 years and the mean age of first sexual intercourse was 16.8 years.

Previous study shows that the majority of girls had their first sexual intercourse with a steady boyfriend, while a significant proportion of men had their first experience with a commercial sex worker or a casual friend.<sup>10</sup> In the study of CREPHA found that the first sexual partners one in ten was a commercial

sex worker.<sup>14</sup> The result of this study shows that among the sexually active adolescents among the girls 55.6% had the first sexual intercourse with their boy friend and among the boys 57.1% had with their girl friend and among the boys 14.3% had the first sexual intercourse with sex worker.

In our study 69.1% respondents used the family planning method during their premarital sex. Among the boys 77.8% and among the girls 38.9% used the family planning method. The study showed that in villages of Nepal, among the sexually active boys 42% used Condom during their last sexual intercourse.<sup>8</sup> Another study by Bhuiya and colleagues in Bangladesh less than one-quarter of sexually experienced boys reported condom use at first sex.<sup>13</sup>

A study from Nigeria found that the 23% faced the problem of pregnancy and vast majority of these pregnancies 88% ended in abortion.<sup>11</sup> In our study the sexually active respondents, 16% faced the problem of unwanted pregnancy and majority of them 53.8% managed it by abortion and the rest of others used medicines for expel.

Gubhaju BB study found that who socialized with sexually experienced peer were nearly seven times more likely to those whose peer were not sexually experienced to have had sex.<sup>9</sup> In our study found that the effect of peer smoking, drinking, drug using habits, and peer sexual behavior have significant association with experience of premarital sex of the respondents.

## Conclusion

Peer relations and role are important to change personality, attitude and behavior of persons. Sensitive issue such as sexuality is difficult to discuss among family members but it is easier to discuss among peers. Inclusion of sex education and the consequences of abusing the substances in adolescence in school curriculum would be the suitable approach for bringing a positive change in the society. The peer education through community programs like youth clubs, sport clubs and through schools and campuses would also be the additional strategies to overcome the problem.

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