

Assessment of Knowledge about and Attitude towards Sexual and Reproductive Health among Advanced Level School Students in Kurunegala Municipal Council Area

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Adolescence is a transitional period in life in which an individual attains sexual maturity. Adolescent's knowledge and attitude on sexual and reproductive health (SRH) can have many implications. If wrongly informed, they can suffer adverse consequences. The objective was to assess SRH knowledge and attitudes among Advanced Level school students in municipal council area in Kurunegala. This was a descriptive cross-sectional study. Data were collected using a pretested self-administered questionnaire. Students who answered $\geq 50\%$ questions in the knowledge assessing section of the questionnaire were considered as having sufficient knowledge. The schools were chosen by selecting sixth of each boys', girls', and mixed schools. The sample included 377 students. Sixty eight percent had sufficient knowledge (70% of girls and 66% boys). The percentages of sufficient knowledge among girls', boys' and mixed schools were 77%, 69%, and 58% respectively. Also, 88% of biology, 63% of mathematics, 61% of commerce, and 59% of art students showed sufficient knowledge, and 99% of total students demonstrated good attitudes on sexual and reproductive health. There was a significant difference ($P < 0.05$) between knowledge regarding SRH and school type as well as subject streams, respectively. The most common intimate person with whom students shared their personal issues, was the mother (50.8%). The other prevalent confiding people were friends (32%), father (9.3%), siblings (6.6%), and teachers (1.3%). Same age groups (55.1%) were the most common source of knowledge on SRH. This study concluded that knowledge regarding SRH was moderately satisfactory while it's relatively low among boys compared to girls. Students in girls' schools are more knowledgeable than boys' and mixed schools. Also, a substantial gap was seen in the knowledge of SRH between biology students and other students. This study suggests conducting special awareness projects, improvement of library facilities and educational materials on SRH in schools as necessary strategies.

Keywords: Adolescents, Knowledge, Attitude, Sexual and reproductive health