

## **Perception regarding Sexuality, Contraceptive and Teenage Pregnancy among Adolescent Studying in Secondary Schools in Palpa District**

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## ABSTRACT

*Adolescence is a period of both opportunities and threats. It is also a phase in life marked by vulnerability to risky sexual behavior and underprivileged reproductive health outcomes. The objective of this study was to assess the perception regarding sexuality, contraceptive and teenage pregnancy among adolescents studying in secondary schools in Palpa District. A cross sectional analytical study designed was applied. Total enumerative sampling technique was used to select 407 schools going adolescents in four selected school in Palpa district. Data was collected using self-administered questionnaire. Analysis was done using descriptive and inferential statistics with SPSS version 20. Findings showed that 56.51% of adolescents had favorable perception on sexuality, 51.84% of adolescents had favorable perception on contraceptive and 55.77% had favorable perception on teenage pregnancy. There were significant association between Sex, Grade, Ethnicity, Type of family of adolescent and level of perception on sexuality, contraceptive and teenage pregnancy where Chi-square p value is less than .05 at 5% level of significance. Based on the findings of the study, majority of adolescents had favorable perception towards sexuality, contraceptive and teenage pregnancy which suggests that adolescents were aware on sexuality, contraceptive and teenage pregnancy.*

**Key words:** Adolescent, Contraceptive, Perception, Sexuality, Teenage Pregnancy

## INTRODUCTION

Adolescents are individuals between the 10-19 years age groups. This is the transition period from childhood to adulthood which involves dramatic physical, sexual, psychological and social developmental changes which poses risks to their health and wellbeing (World Health Organization {WHO}, 2018). Adolescence pregnancy continues to be a complex and challenging issue for families, health workers, educators, societies and governments, and adolescents themselves (WHO, 2014; & United Nations Population Fund {UNFPA}, 2015).

Adolescents are prone to have many developmental issues, including early sexual debut, risky sexual behaviours, sexually transmitted infections, teenage pregnancy and abortions. These challenges could be worse among adolescents who lack the understanding of sexuality, contraceptive and consequences of teenage pregnancy (Scott-Ashley, Akande, Adebayo & Iken, 2020).

Perception on sexuality is subjective experiences; it includes biological and psychological as well as social and cultural dimensions of sexual identity and sexual behavior. Adolescents, in all cultures, experience sexuality in diverse ways. The concept of sexuality includes not only sexual identities, sexual norms, sexual practices and behaviours, but also feelings, desires, fantasies and experiences related to sexual awareness, arousal and sexual acts within heterosexual as well as homosexual relations (Gupta, Mishra & Prabha, 2013). During the adolescence period, there is increasing sexual urge in combination with the unfamiliar,

mysterious emotions and thoughts which may possibly leads to unmarried pregnancy among adolescents (Papathanasiou, Lahana, 2019). Adolescent girls are coerced into unwanted sex or marriage, which leads to them at risk of unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV, and complications during childbirth. In our neighbor country; India, about 22% of adolescent girls had experienced pre-marital sex (Ahuja, Patnaik, Gurchandandeep, Lugani, Sharma, Goyal & Singh, 2019).

Risky sexual behaviours exposes young people to the risk of infection with HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Sexual behaviours like unprotected sex, early sexual debut, using alcohol or drugs before sexual intercourse, multiple sexual partners, sexual intercourse for reward, non-use of condom, patronage of commercial sex workers increases the vulnerability of this age group (Okafor, Ada, Azuike, 2018).

Unsafe abortion is common practice among adolescents. Poverty, peer pressure, and living in a single family are the main reasons of teen age pregnancy (Envuladu, Anke, Zwanikken, Zoakah, 2017; Tchokossa, & Adeyemi, 2018; & Ajewole, Fasoro, Oluwadare, Agboola, Asubiojo, 2017). Perception on sexuality and contraception was found poor among adolescents. Adolescents are still perceived that contraceptives are only for married couples. Majority of adolescents did not know that only one sexual intercourse is possible to become pregnant (Osaikhuwuomwan, Osemwenkha, 2013; McManus, Dhar, 2008; Kumar, Goyal, Singh, Bhardwaj, Mittal, Yadav, 2017; & Sah, Gaurav, Baral, Jha, & Pokharel, 2013).

A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted among 385 adolescents studying in higher secondary schools on perceived behavior and practices of adolescents on sexual and reproductive health and associated factors in Kathmandu. The results showed that less than one quarter (22.9%) of adolescents involved in premarital sexual relation, among them (88), 75 (85.2%) participants have only one sex partner and 13 (14.8%) participants have two and more sex partners, 66 (75%) of them use contraceptive method (Poudel & Poudel, 2014).

Teenage pregnancy is a social threat and common public health problem. It is detrimental to both mother and child because teenage mother is not physically, psychologically and economically ready to bear a child. This phenomenon has multiple adverse consequences on maternal health, child health and overall wellbeing of the society (Mgbokwere, Esienmoh, & Uyana, 2015). Two percent of Nepalese women aged 25-49 had given birth by the age of 15, while 23% had their first birth by age 18 (Ministry of Health and Population, New ERA & ICF International, 2012). So this study aims to identify the perception on sexuality, contraceptive and teen age pregnancy among high school level adolescents.

## **OBJECTIVE**

The objective of this study is to identify the perception on sexuality, contraceptive and teen age pregnancy among adolescents studying in secondary school in Palpa Distric.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A cross sectional analytical study design was adopted to select 407 school going adolescents in four secondary schools in Palpa district. The selected adolescents were between the age of 13 and 19 years. The study was conducted in Tansen Municipality, Palpa district. It is located in western Nepal. Non probability, convenient sampling technique was used to select 407 schools going adolescents studying in grade 9 and 10 in four selected schools namely Shree Saraswati Secondary School, Shree Damkada Secondary School, Shree Sharada Secondary School and Shree Mandali Secondary School of Tansen Municipality.

A structured self-administered questionnaire was developed on the basis of extensive review of literature to find out the perception on sexuality, contraceptive and teenage pregnancy among adolescent. The research instrument consisted of two parts: Part I was related to demographic characteristics (age, sex, grade, ethnicity, religion, type of family, parental education, parental occupation and parental type of marriage). Part II consisted of 5 points Likert scale which identified the perception on sexuality, contraceptive and teenage pregnancy.

### **Scoring criteria**

Perception on sexuality and contraceptive had 9 questions in each discipline and its total score ranged between 0-45 in each discipline. Perception on teenage pregnancy had 10 questions and its total score ranged between 0-50. Mean was calculated from the total score of perception on sexuality, contraceptive and teenage pregnancy. The score equal to mean and above mean was categorized as favorable perception and the score below the mean was categorized as unfavorable perception on sexuality, contraceptive and teenage pregnancy.

### **Validity and reliability of the instrument**

The content validity of the instrument was established by consultation with subject experts. Pretesting of the instrument was done among 41 adolescents in similar setting. Necessary modification was done after its result. Reliability of the instrument was tested using Chronbach's alpha coefficient for perception on sexuality, contraceptive and teenage pregnancy related statements which gave the satisfactory value of .72.

Data was collected after getting ethical approval from Nepal Health Research Council. Data was collected through self-administered questionnaire on Nepali version. Necessary instructions were given to adolescents studying in grade 9 and 10 before administering the questionnaire and data was collected in classroom setting. The respondents were assured that their participation in this study was voluntary and also informed that they could leave the study anytime if they wished to do so. At first data was collected at Shree Mandali Secondary School on 2076/1/17, at Sharadha Secondary School on 2076/2/20, at Shree Saraswati Secondary School on 2076/03/02 and Shree Damkada Secondary School on 2076/3/25.

Confidentiality was maintained by keeping the data source protected by the researcher through proper storage of the filled instruments and through use of code numbers instead of the names in transferring the data from questionnaire to data sheet. After collecting data, informal

discussion on the subject matter was done especially on sexuality and contraceptive. The data was analyzed by using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20. The descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, percentage, mean and standard deviation were calculated. Inferential statistics such as chi-square test was used at p value less than .05 at 5% level of significance.

**RESULTS:**

Regarding the socio-demographic data, the result of this study shows that majority of respondents (58.97%) were early adolescent. Out of 407 adolescents, majority of them (58.50%) studying in grade 9. Nearly similar representation of male (50.37%) and female (49.63%) adolescents were observed. The higher percentages (34.15 %) of respondents were from Dalit Ethnicity. Almost all (98%) were Hindu and about half of respondents (51.60%) were living in single family.

Table 1. Distribution of frequency and percentage regarding perception on sexuality among adolescents

Perception on Sexuality	n=407				
	Strongly agree N (%)	Agree N(%)	Uncertain N(%)	Disagree N(%)	Strongly Disagree N(%)
1. Teenagers should not be physically grown to have a sexual relation	334(82.06)	54(13.27)	6(1.47)	5(1.23)	8(1.97)
2. Sexual relation since teenagers do not cause any reproductive health problems <sup>a</sup>	4(0.98)	-	17(4.18)	23(5.65)	363(89.19)
3. Curiosity encourages adolescent’s sexual activity	29(7.12)	3(0.74)	84(20.64)	47(11.55)	244(59.95)
4. Teenager should permit for sexual relation if their pairs demands for relation <sup>a</sup>	29(7.13)	29(7.13)	24(5.89)	49(12.04)	276(67.81)
5. If teenagers permit sexual relation, their pair would be more committed to them for marriage <sup>a</sup>	263(64.62)	16(3.93)	48(11.79)	19(4.67)	61(14.99)
6. Teenager would be lonely if they do not permit sexual relation <sup>a</sup>	32(7.86)	60(14.74)	15(3.69)	47(11.55)	253(62.16)
7. If teenagers permit sexual relation, they have got intimate friends <sup>a</sup>	20(4.91)	67(16.46)	39(9.58)	73(17.94)	208(51.11)
8. Those who have multiple sexual partners, there may have the chance of having sexually transmitted infection	402(98.77)	3(0.74)	2(0.49)	-	--
9. Sex education encourage teenager to have sexual relation <sup>a</sup>	30(7.37)	30(7.37)	66(16.22)	14(3.44)	267(65.60)

*Note <sup>a</sup> denote negative statement.*

Regarding sexuality, finding shows that 98.77% of respondents strongly agreed that there may have the chance of sexually transmitted infection who have multiple sexual partners. Most

of the respondents (89.19%) strongly disagreed on the statement that sexual relation since teenage do not cause any reproductive health problems (Table 1).

Table 2. Distribution of frequency and percentage regarding perception on contraceptive among adolescents

Perception on contraceptive	n=407				
	Strongly agree N (%)	Agree N(%)	Uncertain N(%)	Disagree N(%)	Strongly Disagree N(%)
1. Contraceptive are only for adult married person <sup>a</sup>	184(45.21)	16(3.93)	22(5.41)	52(12.77)	133(32.68)
2. Contraceptive are effective in avoiding pregnancy	371(91.15)	18(4.42)	15(3.69)	-	3(0.74)
3. Advertising the information about contraceptive use is immoral <sup>a</sup>	-	-	22(5.41)	52(12.77)	333(81.82)
4. Contraceptive are so expensive to use <sup>a</sup>	10(2.46)	10(2.46)	73(17.93)	33(8.11)	281(69.04)
5. Adolescents who use contraceptives are bad person <sup>a</sup>	109(26.78)	57(14.00)	98(24.08)	21(5.16)	122(29.98)
6. Contraceptive use is beneficial to all sexually active adolescents	93(22.85)	56(13.76)	216(53.07)	16(3.93)	26(6.39)
7. Contraceptive use leads to infertility <sup>a</sup>	42(10.32)	36(8.85)	269(66.09)	14(3.44)	46(11.30)
8. The process of acquiring contraceptives is often embarrassing <sup>a</sup>	93(22.85)	44(10.81)	24(5.90)	40(9.83)	206(50.61)
9. It is very easy to abort if pregnancy happen, so do not need contraceptives <sup>a</sup>	8(1.97)	1(0.24)	19(4.67)	41(10.07)	338(83.05)

*Note <sup>a</sup> denote negative statement.*

Regarding the contraceptive, 91.15% of respondents strongly agreed that contraceptive was effective in avoiding pregnancy. Similarly, 83.05% of respondents strongly disagreed on the statement that there was very easy to abort the pregnancy, so they did not feel necessary of contraceptives (Table 2).

Table 3. Distribution of frequency and percentage regarding perception on teenage pregnancy among adolescents

Perception on teenage pregnancy	n=407				
	Strongly agree N (%)	Agree N(%)	Uncertain N(%)	Disagree N(%)	Strongly Disagree N(%)
1. Teenager female are physically and mentally prepare for pregnancy <sup>a</sup>	-	20(4.91)	9(2.21)	40(9.83)	338(83.05)
2. Teenage pregnancy are due to the teenage girls mistake <sup>a</sup>	45(11.06)	30(7.37)	5(1.23)	34(8.35)	293(71.99)
3. If teenager girl gives birth; she may face physical, psychological, social and financial problems	338(83.05)	45(11.06)	24(5.89)	-	-
4. Teenage mother rear her child along with her growth	293(71.99)	53(13.02)	61(14.99)	-	--
5. Teenage pregnant mother can continue her education	16(3.93)	39(9.58)	299(73.47)	32(7.86)	21(5.16)
6. Teenage pregnancy increase maternal morbidity and mortality	376(92.39)	27(6.63)	4(0.98)	-	-
7. Teenage pregnant mother give health baby <sup>a</sup>	10(2.46)	38(9.34)	127(31.20)	35(8.60)	197(48.40)
8. Teenage pregnancy prevents girls' possibilities for exercising the rights to education, health and employment	298(73.23)	27(6.63)	44(10.81)	25(6.14)	13(3.19)
9. Easily availability and accessibility of contraceptive can decrease teenage pregnancy	354(86.98)	34(8.35)	19(4.67)	-	-
10. Adolescent male should also engage in teenage pregnancy prevention program	363(89.19)	36(8.85)	4(0.98)	4(0.98)	-

**Note <sup>a</sup> denote negative statement.**

Table 3 shows the perception regarding teenage pregnancy, 92.39% of respondents strongly agreed that teenage pregnancy increased maternal morbidity and mortality. The 89.19% of respondents strongly agreed that adolescent males were also engaged in teenage pregnancy prevention program.



Table 4. Respondents' Perception on Sexuality, Contraceptive and Teenage Pregnancy  
n=407

Characteristics	Number	Percentage
<b>Sexuality</b>		
Favorable perception	230	56.51
Unfavorable Perception	177	43.49
<b>Mean score ± SD= 37.08±5.22</b>		
<b>Contraceptive</b>		
Favorable perception	211	51.84
Unfavorable perception	196	48.16
<b>Mean score ± SD= 34.47±4.57</b>		
<b>Teenage pregnancy</b>		
Favorable perception	227	55.77
Unfavorable perception	180	44.23
<b>Mean score ± SD= 44.18±4.17</b>		

More than half of respondents 230 (56.51%) had favorable perception on sexuality. Similarly 211 (51.84%) of respondents had favorable perception on contraceptive and 227 (55.77%) had favorable perception on teenage pregnancy (Table 4).

Table 3. Respondents' Overall Perception on Sexuality, Contraceptive and Teenage Pregnancy  
n=407

Overall Perception	Number	Percentage
Favorable perception	265	65.11
Male	152	37.35
Female	113	27.76
Unfavorable Perception	142	34.89
Male	53	13.02
Female	89	21.87

Table 5 depicts the respondents' overall perception of on sexuality, contraceptive and teenage pregnancy where majority of the respondents 265 (65.11%) had favorable perception on sexuality, contraceptive and teenage pregnancy.

Table 6. Association of demographic variables with perception of sexuality, contraceptive and teenage pregnancy



**n=407**

Level of perception				
Socio-demographic variables	Favorable perception N(%)	Unfavorable perception N(%)	Chi-square	p- value
<b>Sex of adolescent</b>				
Male	152 (74.15)	53 (25.85)	14.84	.000
Female	113 (55.94)	89 (44.06)		
<b>Grade of adolescent</b>				
9	136 (57.14)	102 (42.86)	16.018	.000
10	129 (76.33)	40 (23.67)		
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
Bhramin and Chhetri	116 (76.32)	36 (23.68)	13.409	.000
Others	149 (58.43)	106 (41.57)		
<b>Type of family</b>				
Single	153 (72.86)	57 (27.14)	11.461	.001
Joint	112 (56.85)	85 (43.15)		
<b>Literacy status of Father</b>				
Literate	231 (64.71)	126 (35.29)	2.09	.752
Illiterate	34 (68)	16 (32)		
<b>Literacy status of Mother</b>				
Literate	220 (63.58)	126 (36.42)	2.369	.146
Illiterate	45 (73.77)	16 (26.27)		
<b>Parental type of marriage</b>				
Love marriage	39 (9.58)	27 (6.63)	1.257	.263
Arrange marriage	226(55.53)	115 (28. 26)		

There were significant association between Sex, Grade, Ethnicity, Type of family of adolescents and level of perception on sexuality, contraceptive and teenage pregnancy ( $\chi^2 = 14.84$  P=.000,  $\chi^2=16.01$  P=.000,  $\chi^2 = 13.40$  P=.000,  $\chi^2=11.46$  P=.001 respectively) whereas, literacy status of father and mother and parental type of marriage had not significantly associated with level of perception on sexuality, contraceptive and teenage pregnancy (Table 6).

## DISCUSSION

The overall perception on sexuality of respondents (56.51%) was found to have favorable perception in this study. Regarding the sexuality most of the respondents (98.77%) perceived that those who have multiple sexual partners may have the chance of sexually transmitted infection. Majority of the respondents (89.19%) negatively perceived that sexual relation since teenagers do not cause any reproductive health problem. Similarly, 334(82.06%) respondents strongly agreed on teenagers should not be physically grown to have a sexual relation. On the statement curiosity encourages adolescents' sexual activity; 244(59.95%) respondents strongly disagreed. By this response it is understood that adolescents were not aware about their curiosity. Regarding the statement about whether a teenager should be permitted for sexual relation if their pairs demands for sexual relation 276 (67.81%) respondents strongly disagreed, similarly

263(64.62%) respondents strongly agreed that if teenagers were permitted for sexual relation, their pair would be more committed to them for marriage.

Respondents were against having multiple sexual partners as this is understood from result where 263(64.62%) respondents strongly agreed that if teenagers were permitted for sexual relation, their pair would be more committed to them for marriage. Similarly respondents perception on the statement; teenager would be lonely if they were not permitted for sexual relation, the result showed that 253(62.16%) strongly disagreed.

Regarding the perception on sexual relation, out of 407 respondents, 208 (51.11%) strongly disagreed on the statement if teenagers were permitted for sexual relation, they would have intimate friends. More than half of the respondents (65.60%) strongly agreed that sex education is beneficial for teenager; a similar finding was seen on the need of sex education in a study conducted in Umbala District in India, where most of adolescents (93.5%) were in favor of sex education (Sah, Gaurav, Baral, & Jha, 2013). Similarly the findings of a study conducted in Bajhang, Nepal among higher secondary school level students showed that 48% of the respondents strongly agreed on the necessity of sexual health education to students at schools, 31% of respondents disagreed on learning about sexual health encourages premarital sex, 33% strongly agreed on needs of sexual health education for healthy relationship with the opposite sex (Thapa & Chand SB).

Regarding the perception of contraceptive among adolescents 32.68% of the respondents strongly disagreed those contraceptives were only for adult married person. This finding is consistent with the findings of a study conducted in South Delhi India where only 32% thought it should only be taken by married women. Similarly 91.15% strongly agreed that contraceptive are effective in avoiding pregnancy in this study where as in another study done in India showed that condom is the most common method for youths/adolescents (38.1%) (Kumar, Goyal, Singh, Bhardwaj, Mittal & Yadav, 2017).

In this study 69.04% of the respondents strongly disagreed that contraceptive are so expensive to use, similarly only 29.98% of the respondents strongly disagreed that adolescents who uses contraceptives are bad person. By this finding it is understood that majority of the adolescents knew about free availability of contraceptives and the use of contraceptive/s before marriage is not bad. The 22.85% of respondents strongly agreed that contraceptive use is beneficial to all sexually active adolescents where as 11.30%, 50.61% and 83.05% of respondents strongly disagreed that contraceptive use leads to infertility, the process of acquiring contraceptives is often embarrassing and it is very easy to abort if pregnancy happen, so contraceptive is not needed respectively. This finding contradicts with the findings of a study conducted in Nigeria where 42.9% had misperceptions about its safety, believing that contraceptives are dangerous and chemicals in contraceptives can damage their reproductive system (Okanlawon, Reeves & Agbaje, 2010).

In this study half of the respondents (50.61%) strongly disagreed on the statement, the process of acquiring contraceptives is often embarrassing this finding is similar with a study

conducted in Nigeria which showed that 68.7% of the adolescents felt embarrassed or ashamed to use or purchase condom/contraceptives (Osaikhuwuomwan & Osemwenkha, 2013).

Regarding the perception on teenage pregnancy, in this study 73.47% of the respondents were uncertain on the statement that teenage pregnant mother can continue her education. This finding is similar with the study conducted in Nigeria where 83.7% of adolescents perceived that teenage pregnancy prevents from finishing school education (Ajewole, Fasoro, Oluwadare, Agboola & Asubiojo, 2017).

Regarding the perception on sexuality, contraceptive and teenage pregnancy among adolescents more than half of respondents had favorable perception on sexuality (56.51%), contraceptives (51.84%) and teenage pregnancy (55.77%).

## LIMITATIONS

The study was conducted only in few schools among adolescents studying in grade 9 and 10 using a non-probability sampling so; the findings of this study cannot be generalized to other setting with confidence.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the identified perceptions of sexuality, contraceptive and teenage pregnancy majority of the respondents had favorable perception. By this study it is concluded that adolescents were aware on sexuality, contraceptive and teenage pregnancy. There were significant association between sex, grade, ethnicity, type of family of adolescent and level of perception on sexuality, contraceptive and teenage pregnancy.

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## Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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