

**Research Article**

## **A Comparative Study of Sexual Communication between the Naglabhudi Slum and the Adanbagh Developed Colony, Agra**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The present study is based on the researcher's field work among the adolescent girls in two areas of Agra. It has been observed that the sexual communication defers in terms of the socio-economic background of the respondents located in different colonies. In the slum of Naglabhudi, sexual education is considered not only unnecessary, but also a taboo to talk about; on the contrary, in the developed colony of Adanbagh, it is not only acceptable, but the parents even encourage desired discussions on sexual communication. This study would focus on the reasons behind the skewed communication between mothers and adolescent girls, and how the complex issues between them can be resolved. In this paper, the researcher has chosen a comparative study of the slum area of Naglabhudi and the developed colony of Adanbagh in Agra.

**Keywords:** Adolescent girls, mothers slum, communication, sexual communication

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Adolescence is simply a transition stage from childhood to adulthood. It is a stage which all young people go through to become biologically and sexually mature. In girls, it may start as early as at 10-12 years of age. Adolescence is a time when rapid changes occur in the body, emotions, attitudes, values, intellect and relationships.

Adolescent changes are triggered by the hormones of the hypothalamus, the pituitary gland and the gonads. The hormones bring about the development and maintenance of the secondary sex characteristics (Panthaki, 2005).

Adolescents are passionate people and tend to get carried away on impulse. They can experience irrepressible joy or inconsolable sadness; gregariousness or loneliness; altruism or self-centeredness; instable curiosity; boredom; confidence; or self-doubt. While growing up, maximum changes occur in adolescents (Panthaki, 2005).

According to Eric Erikson, 'Before an adolescent can successfully abandon the security of childhood and her dependence on others, she must have some ideas of who she is, where she is going and what the possibility are of getting there' (Panthaki, 2005).

Adolescence is a time of commotion, turbulence, rising independence, etc., the transition from being a child to an adult (12-19 years). As teens get revealed to newly accessible choices, they make decisions about lifestyles that may become the habits of their lifetime. Although most teens are healthy and make a safe transition into adulthood, teens face many risks: substance abuse, sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy, violence, abuse and accidental trauma. Even one-fourth of all sexually transmitted infections occur among teens.

Communication with an adolescent is extremely important, but many of the typical changes that occur during adolescence tend to interfere with the effectiveness and amount of interaction between the mother and the child. Teens tend to spend more time in their room; they want to spend more time with their friends and not with their family. Although adults have much more experience in life than adolescents, teens are usually not aware of this fact, nor do they believe it to be so; therefore, the suggestions and directions of families are often not valued. Consequently, opportunities for communication weaken during this period of the adolescent's life. Just because of these and other factors, during adolescence, girls do not confide to their mothers readily and do not communicate their feelings as much as they did when they were younger. On the other hand, girls may have difficulty talking to their parents, expressing opinions, discussing things that bother them or relating their experiences. These difficulties with verbal interaction are generally termed *lack of communication* (Fontenelle, 2000). Communication of sexual issues between the adolescent girls and their mothers is really very important to create a sustainable ecological society; a mother is a very trustful person in everybody's life and healthy communication is required between the mothers and the children. This will help in developing a positive attitude towards life, and also helps to establish visualistic values and take correct decisions in the future. If we observe our day-to-day life, we get to know that in the slum areas, people are not aware of sexual issues, and if we talk about these issues in front of them, they react very weirdly. They think that those are totally prohibited words (*Source*: Field survey carried out in 2013).

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Panthaki (2005), In her research talks about sexual issues, maturation problems, puberty issues, alleviation of anxieties, provides guidance in making responsible decisions instil human values in young people she even covers all various aspects of human sexuality and including basic reproductive, mental, physical and emotional changes that occur with growing up, changing family roles, healthy and responsible man-woman relationships, and the importance of dignity and mutual respect.

Lagina (2002), gives information about Adolescents, their feelings about being disconnected from home school and family and their involvement in activities that put their health at risk. Most importantly it gives the reason for their loneliness and disconnect from home. This paper also talks about parents-adolescent warmth and communication promotes health, achievement, and self-worth.

Mahale (1987), describe about the parents-child relationship in different sized families, describing it as the social development of the adulthood and the impact of parents' educational level on the interest of the parents and of their adolescent children in school education. It also gives relative importance of family's economic status to the educational and national aspirations of the children and of the parents for their children.

Sugar (1979), presented about early onset of puberty and the first menstrual period, how improved nutrition and health care, influences the experience of latency and adolescence, and how social environmental change and expectations can influence female development etc. Relation of manifest behaviour is to the internal psychological climate, emotional and mental processes are all discussed in the book.

Garda & Alexander (2009), they talks about the communication gap between parents and children, which further leads to several problems in their sexual and reproductive health, due to the lack of awareness.

World Health Organization (2001), has research that adolescent are those who are between the age group of 12-19 years. In this age some rapid changes in body, socially, mentally and psychologically etc are obvious in every adolescent's life.

Newcomer and Udry (1985), in this research they explain about parent's communication with their adolescent daughter on sexual issues and health issues.

Pick & Palos (1995), talks about communication between mother and adolescent girls on sexual theme is of great concern.

## **OBJECTIVE**

The objective of this study was to find out the need for communication between mothers and adolescent girls regarding sexual issues.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Universe and Sample**

- As the population in the target areas was largely accessible, considering such a huge sample was difficult; hence, purposive sampling method was used so that the size of the sample would satisfy the objective of the researcher. Hence, in both the areas, 60 randomly selected adolescent girls were considered as the samples for the study.

### **Target Group**

- Adolescent girls aged between 12 and 19 years were considered as the target group for the study.

### **Area of Study**

The Naglabhudi slum and the Adanbagh colony of Agra were visited to study the various aspects of the above-stated problems and to get a better insight and understanding of the problem.

### **Source of Data Collection**

#### **1) Primary – Field work**

**Tools** – (a) Case study; (b) Interview

#### **2) Secondary**

**Tools-** (a) Books; (b) Journal; (c) Magazines; (d) Internet

**Research Design:** Descriptive

### **The Need of Sexual Communication**

In slum areas, it is observed that girls are not close to their families and hesitate to talk about sexual issues with their mothers. They seek intimacy outside, with their friends, who provide incorrect information. Whereas in the developed areas, girls openly discuss various issues related to sexual or biological nature. In slums, the pattern of interaction between a mother and an adolescent girl child was rather skewed, and mothers hesitated to talk about tabooed and sexual issues, even when girls reached the age of puberty. They refused to educate their daughters' about menstruation, its reasons, precautions to be taken and its effects. However, in the developed colony, the interaction between a mother and an adolescent girl child

was better than in slums. Mothers were comparatively open-minded in these areas. They discussed many issues with their daughters, like menstruation, contraception, abortion, etc. (Source: Field survey carried out in 2013).

### General Information of Adolescent Girls

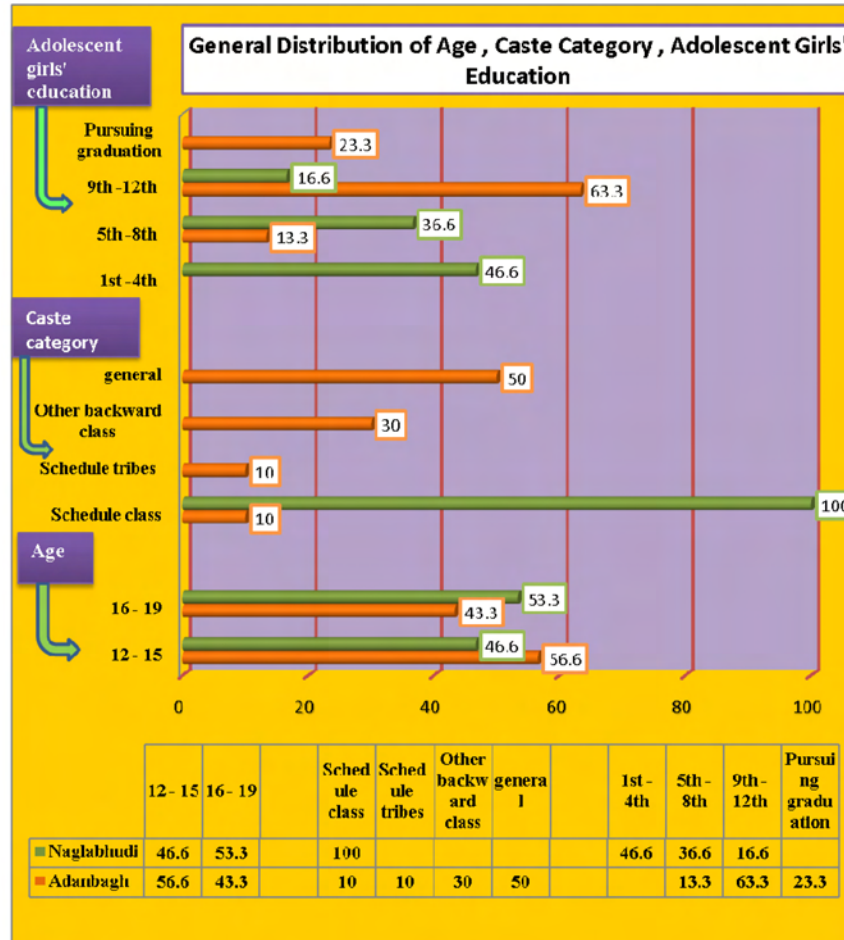


Figure 1: General information of the adolescent girls

- In the slums areas, most of the families belonged to the schedule caste; but in colonies, most respondents belonged to the general category.
- In the category of education, if we analyse Adanbagh, then both the colonies are fully educated, but in Naglabhudi, most of the girls do not continue their

studies. It shows the lack of education; not only girls, but even their parents rarely go for higher education. There is not a single family that is well-educated.

- In the slum areas, most families belong to below poverty line and they earn very less. In Naglabhudi, even if both the mother and the father earn, still their income is very less when compared with those living in the colonies.
- In Naglabhudi, most of the families live in a joint family structure, but in the colonies, mostly nuclear families are found.

**Comparison of Both Areas through Data Interpretation of Adolescent Girls living in the Slum and the Colony**

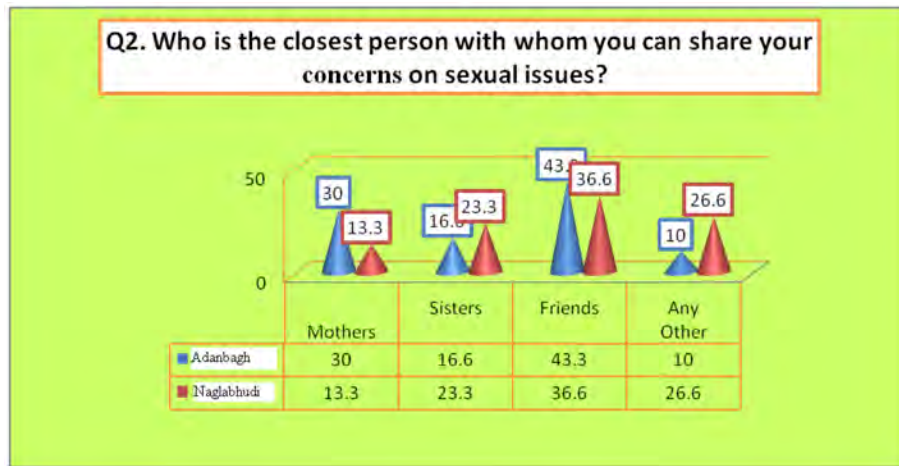


Figure 2: The interaction of the adolescent girls with their mothers on sexual issues in Adanbagh and Naglabhudi are compared

During the survey, we got to know that in the Naglabhudi slum, 36.6% adolescent girls were close to their friends and only 13.3% were close to their mothers; 23.3% were close to their sister and 26.6% were close to any other person in the family or out of the family. Similarly, in the developed colony, 43.3% girls were close to their friends and only 30% were close to their mothers; 16.6% were close to their sisters and only 10% were close to some other family members or outsiders.

As shown in Figure 3, 76.6% girls from Adanbagh said that they discussed about menstrual cycles with their mothers, while 23.3% said that they did not discuss about menstrual cycles with their mothers. However, in Naglabhudi, 30% girls said that they discussed about menstrual cycles, but 70% said that they did not talk about menstrual cycles with their mothers. In the slum areas, discussions

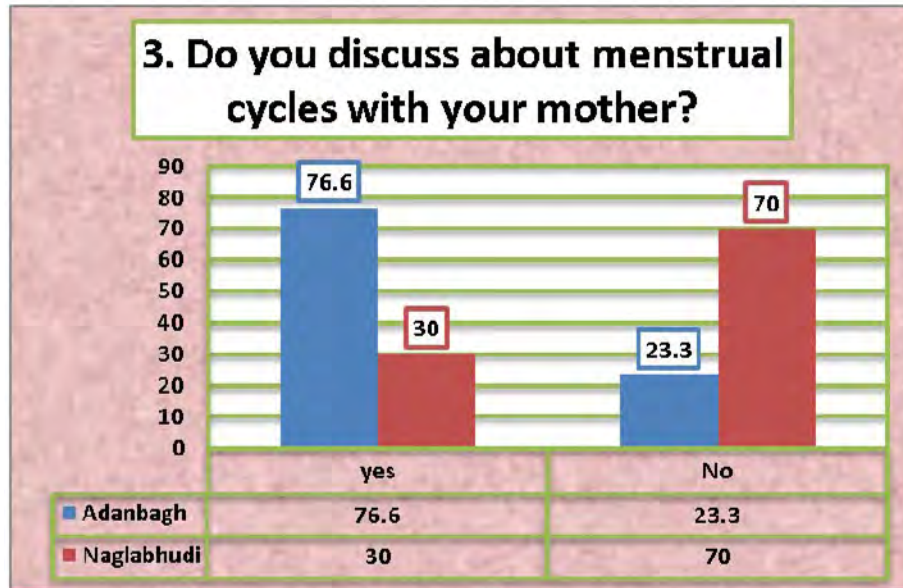


Figure 3: The interaction of the adolescent girls with their mothers about menstruation in Adanbagh and Naglabhudi are compared.

about the menstrual cycle remains confined to the female members of the family, especially the elder sisters and friends. Such issues are, to a great extent, not discussed with the mother due to the traditional family structure of hierarchy and subordination between the mother and the child. Some of the other reasons for this are listed below:

- Taboo on controversial issues like sex.
- Lack of open culture.
- Lack of time.
- Poverty-ridden society.

In total, 70% of the girls of Adanbagh said they talked to their mothers regarding the sanitary material to be used during menses, while 30% said they did not talk about the sanitary material to be used during menses with their mothers. In Naglabhudi, 26.6% girls said yes and 73.3% said no, when asked whether they discussed about the sanitary material to be used during menses with their mothers.

As shown in Figure 5, in Naglabhudi, 96.6% adolescent girls used cloth and only 3.3% girls used sanitary napkins. In Adanbagh, only 10% girls used cloth and 90% girls used sanitary napkins. Proper sanitary napkins were not used by most

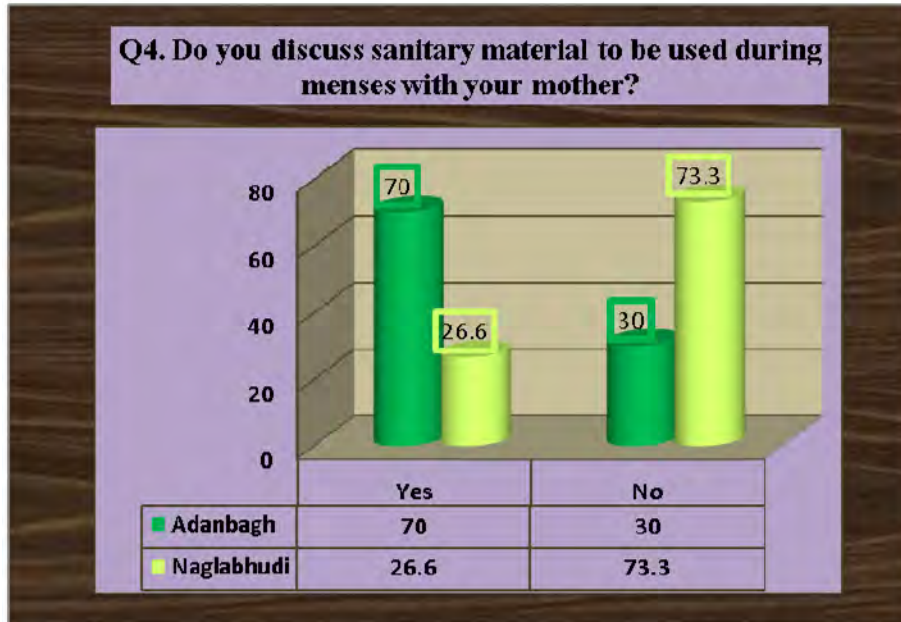


Figure 4: Discussions of the adolescents regarding the sanitary material to be used during menses with their mothers

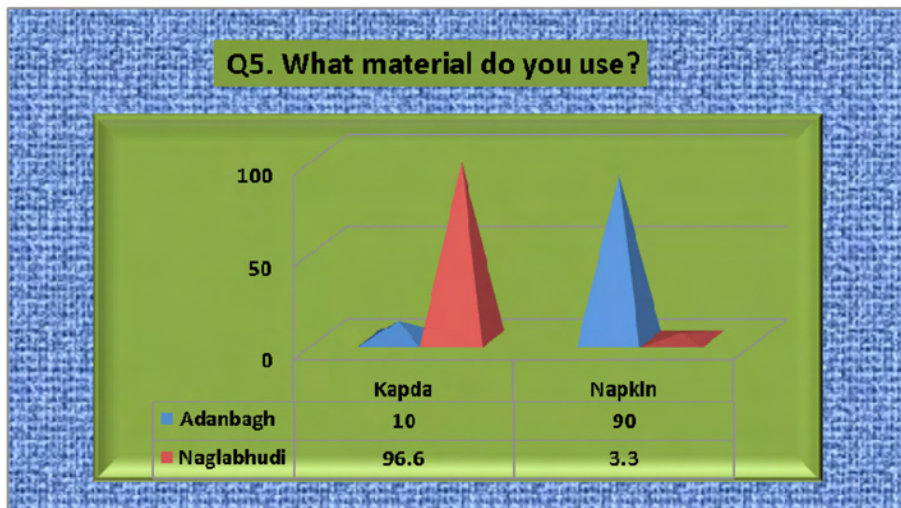


Figure 5: Comparison of the material used during menstruation in Adanbagh and Naglabhudi

of the respondents in Naglabhudi. This shows gross neglect of hygiene, and can affect the physical growth. Neglecting the physical health of the adolescents might have detrimental effect on their upbringing.

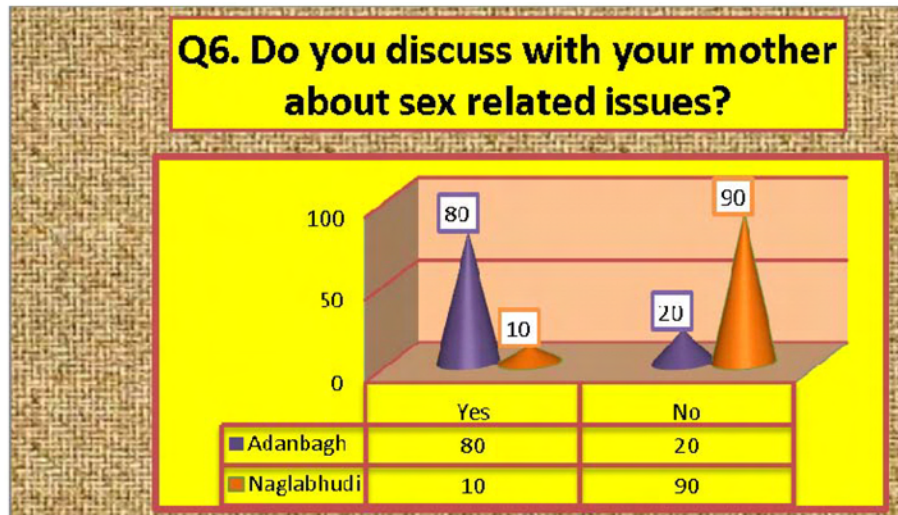


Figure 6: The discussion of sex-related issues by the adolescents with their mothers in Adanbagh and Naglabhudi are compared.

The graph given in Figure 6 shows that adolescent girls were not open to their mothers in the Naglabhudi slum. Only 10% said they had discussed sex-related issues with their mother and 90% said that they had not discussed sex-related issues with their mother. In Adanbagh, 80% girls had discussed sex-related issues with their mother and 20% said that they had not discussed sex-related issues with mother. It shows the communication gap in the slum area. Communication gap between parents and adolescent girls on tabooed issues is a common feature in the Indian society because of the prevalent social structure.

#### Communication with Others than with Mother

When adolescent girls feel disconnected from home and family, they may become involved with an outsider. It may be with some stranger or some known person, because at the age of adolescence, they want to get information about issues like menstruation, puberty, sex, bodily changes, etc. Girls should get information from their mother as they are close to them. No one else can take their place. Adolescence is an age where many changes, like physical, psychological and emotional changes, take place and girls are curious to know about these. They have many questions in their mind, and at that time, only their mothers can help them (*Source*: Field survey carried out in 2013).

In slums, mothers think that sexual issues are not important, and due to this attitude, even children are not open with their mothers. They do not discuss unpleasant incidents like eve-teasing with their mothers and also mothers do not react in a supportive way towards their children. In the Naglabhudi slum, most of the adolescent girls have dropped out of schools as they do not want to study anymore. This action of theirs is supported by their mothers, one of who goes ahead to say 'When she does not want to study, why should I force; even it is good she in front of my eyes' (*Source: Field survey carried out in 2013*).

### **CASE STUDY**

#### **Statement of a Girl in Naglabhudi, Aged 16 Years**

Researcher - Does your mother educate you on contraception (in Hindi, the researcher explains grabnirodhak)?

Girl- No, never, if I ask she will slap on my face (with laughs).

Researcher- Have you ever heard of this word?

Girl- Yes, I know about it (*contraception*).

Researcher- Who told you?

Girl- My female friend. She knows each and every thing. She told me a lot about many things.

Researcher- What has she told you, please explain them to me too (with laugh)?

Girl- (With laugh) Nothing, just about things like period problems, girlfriend and boyfriend relationships, etc.

Researcher- Are you involved in a romantic relationship with a boy?

Girl- (First she said no, but later, after developing a friendly relation with the researcher) Yes.

Ignoring the behaviour is the main problem; a mother ignores her daughters many times, especially in slums. In Naglabhudi, only 13.3% girls are close to their mothers, rest 86.7% are close to their friends, sisters or any other person who may be an outsider or family a member. They communicate freely with other persons than their mothers. In addition, only 30% girls discuss about menstrual cycles with their mothers, while the remaining 70% girls discuss with their friends or relatives. This shows that there is a communication gap on sex-related issues between the mother and the daughter. However, a situation just opposite of this has been observed in the developed areas, where adolescent girls are more aware and communicate with their mothers on sexual issues, and they also communicate with friends and outsiders who have proper knowledge on such issues. When a

person knows the pros and cons about any subject, he/she is aware of the problems and reacts according to the situation. Some questions regarding attraction n, somebody sex, contraception, etc. should be observed by mothers to satisfy the curiosity of their adolescent daughter. This way, they will get proper knowledge through proper sources, and this job should be handled by someone who is close and elder to the girl so that she does not seek information from wrong sources (*Source*: Field survey carried out in 2013).

## CONCLUSION

The researcher concludes by saying that though the literacy rate of our country has upgraded in the last few years, there are still some issues in our society that we do not want to put some light on. Adolescents are considered to be the future of our country, but the researcher has observed that the issues and the stresses they go through are not discussed openly, which sometimes leads to them taking the route of crimes like juvenile delinquency, illicit sexual relationships, etc., and this is finally the outcome of the lack of trust among people. In our society, sex is considered to be a taboo issue. Hence, talking to friends on such issues is considered to be shameful. Issues of intimacy like sexual concern and hormonal activities are dealt with a narrow approach in the Indian families. These problems expand in big uneducated families of the slum areas as such issues are not their primary concerns. In these slum areas, there is the problem of communication gap between the mother and the child, affecting their behaviour regarding such issues. The need of sexual communication to create a sustainable society we need to communicate on various complex matters between an adolescent girl and her mother is a serious issue that needs to be dealt with care and it should be a bond of affection and complete trust. Breach of trust happens when there is a communication gap.

An element of 'trust' is missing as far as family members are concerned. Hence, such issues are discussed only with friends and outsiders in the slum areas. Sexual education is not considered as an important aspect of an individual's life 'knowledge', and hence knowledge about sexual issues is derived from the wrong sources and in a distorted fashion, which stunts one's personality.

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