



Short Review Paper

A literature review on health among school going adolescents in India

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Abstract

Adolescence is a span of tremendous biological changes in the human life span. The adolescents need both physical and mental health for better wellbeing and growth. Most adolescents are in the school-going age. Therefore, the present review is focused on health among school going adolescents in India. The review focused on pertinent studies from different online search engines, journals and unpublished thesis from Mizoram University library and articles of the past 10 years. The reviews show that the rate of risks to adolescent health is increased in day to day life affecting the physical and mental health of school going adolescents. There was a dearth of studies focusing on prevention, intervention and promotion plans for school going adolescents in India. Therefore, there is a need to provide a comprehensive intervention and monitoring package for enhancing the life of school going adolescents in India.

Keywords: Health, school going adolescents, India, Review.

Introduction

Adolescents in Indian Scenario: Every fifth person is an adolescent in the age between 10 to 19 years of in India¹. Health is one of the most important factors of development in any country. A developing country like India needs much improvement of its health care system especially among the adolescents.

A review on the health of school going adolescents in India

The review is based on the secondary data from PubMed, Science direct, Google scholar, Cochrane library, and Psycinfo, journals and unpublished thesis from Mizoram University library. There were around more than 70 articles from the last 10 years were reviewed based on health aspects and the terms like health-risk behaviour, dietary behaviour, hygiene, tobacco, alcohol, drugs, HIV/AIDS, mental health, unintentional injury, Interventional studies among school going adolescents were used in the search engines. The following are the major findings found from the review.

A number of scales were focused on health assessment of school going adolescents. The Global school-based student health survey² and Indian Adolescent Health Questionnaire³ covered all aspects under health of adolescents. The Health-risk behaviors are bodily health, bodily activity, diet, cleanliness, therapeutic care, HIV/AIDS, tobacco, liquor and drugs, violence, domestic violence and unintended wound and mental health. These factors affect a student's performance in school.

A review on the adolescent health difficulties in India during 2001 to 2015 found that poor sexual health knowledge, prevalence of dysmenorrhoea, tobacco, overweight, anaemia, depressive problems, physical fights, worry and loneliness, dental problems are high among adolescents and for solving such issues, there is need for participation from family and community⁴. A study conducted on health hazard behaviour of school going adolescents in rural-urban area in west Bengal, India found that high risk on dietary behaviors was more in urban areas while both males and females are at risk in other domains also⁵. One study intended to understand the Health-Risk Behaviors and Protective Factors of school going Adolescents between 13 to 17 years in Tezpur, Assam, India. The study revealed prevalence of health-risk behaviors like diet, hygiene, physical activity and peer problems in a sizable number of participants. Mental health status in more than one fourth of the participants called for concern⁶.

The domain wise findings show that dietary behaviour of the adolescents is different from urban and rural prevalence. In urban, there is high consumption of soft drinks and fast foods⁷ but in rural areas, the problem is poor economic status⁸. The adolescents need awareness on personal hygiene and adolescent girls in particular need awareness on menstrual hygiene⁹.

Tobacco use among adolescents is high in India and a substantive review found a elevated hazard of key health-allied complaint and numerous formation of cancers such as oropharyngeal cancers connected with the crunch of tobacco and therefore the dire need for generating oral health education programs in schools in India¹⁰. The studies found high alcohol use among male adolescents as compared to their female

counterparts¹¹. A review article by Priyanka and Ankita¹² found that the high prevalence in drug abuse and the hazard aspects for drug abuse by adolescents might be due to such factors as a genetic predilection to substance exploitation, personality traits that replicate an absence of societal connection, poor socio-economic background, family attachment, affiliation and parent management and attention, a past of existence mistreated or deserted, emotional difficulties, pressure, derisory coping skills and social support¹². Drug use among adolescents is also hugely associated with peers, refusal by peers due to lack of conveyance skills, poor scholastic skills, non-success in school, a antiquity of anti-social behaviour and misbehaviour.

A study on mental health status of adolescents found that less than ten percentage of the participants have some level of mental health issues¹³. There is a need to provide proper awareness among adolescents in India¹⁴. There were occurrences of different types of unintentional wounds among the school children¹⁵.

The above reviews found a high and increasing prevalence of health risks among school going adolescents. Proper interventions and awareness on each health aspect should be implemented in every school in India.

Factors influencing the prevalence of Health among school going adolescents

Each domain of health has separate factors that influence adolescents. The poor dietary behaviors among school going adolescents because of the untimely intake of food, poverty, and poor hygiene will lead to oral and stomach issues and other diseases. The availability of gateway drugs such as tobacco products near the school or acquired from friends have a negative influence on school going adolescents. Bullying, physical and/or sexual abuse by peers, teachers or parents contribute to high risk of emotional and mental trauma among school going adolescents. The effects of abuse lead to sleep disturbance, emotional problems and conduct problems. There is lack of awareness on HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases among school going adolescents. All such factors have an impact on the academic, career and future life of the school going adolescent.

Need to promote, prevent and evaluate health risk issues among school going adolescents in India

There were few interventional studies targeted on health among school adolescents in India. The secondary data analysis found that the interventional studies are more effective for school going adolescents^{16,17}. There is a need for the effective intervention and regular evaluation studies for the development and growth of school going adolescents. A model for adolescent school mental health programme in Kerala was developed by UNARV clinic over a period of 5 years. The study conclude that the school teachers were trained as primary counsellors due to

lack of man power and this was made as a district model¹⁸. However, there is a need to develop models, manuals, and workbooks for the promotion, prevention and regular follow up programmes on each health aspect which will definitely enhance the health of school-going adolescents.

Conclusion

School going adolescents need to be provided with proper and systematic programmes on health-related issues. Proper needs-assessment, intervention, monitoring, and evaluation plans, and school health policies need to take place. A joint effort from the school authority, parents, teachers, school social workers, psychologist, medical professionals, and mental health professionals will bring forth a comprehensive model for health, education and all-round development of the school going adolescent in India.

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