

155. From Masturbation to Menstruation: Understanding Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices among Adolescents in Bihar, India

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Introduction

- EngenderHealth supported the Government of India's national adolescent health program: Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK)
- RKSK aims to improve SRH via mass media campaigns, community outreach & school interventions
- EngenderHealth conducted a baseline study in August 2019

Methodology

- Adaptation of globally validated questionnaire
- Multi-staged sampling across 8 blocks in Sitmarhi district of Bihar
- 1,632 adolescent respondents (aged 15 to 19)

Findings

- 28.3% boys & 37.6% girls knew where to obtain a contraceptive method
- 58.0% boys & 32.8% girls aware of HIV/AIDS; 9.4% boys & 26.2% girls knew common signs & symptoms of other sexually transmitted infections
- 9.4% boys & 17.3% girls answered correctly that "the loss of semen does not lead to physical weakness in boys;" 11.6% boys & 28.7% girls responded correctly that "masturbation does not cause serious damage to health"
- When asked if menstruating girls should be allowed to attend school, play, take a bath, or enter a kitchen or religious space, positive responses from boy ranged from 27.7% to 37.4%
- 41.3% boys & 59.6% girls prefer to receive SRH info from a family member; 90.8% boys & 98.6% girls were comfortable discussing health with their mothers

Summary & Conclusions

- All adolescent groups, regardless of sex, demonstrated SRH knowledge gaps & misconceptions
- Future programs should use gender-appropriate approaches to increase SRH awareness
- Engaging & enabling mothers to provide accurate SRH information could be a promising approach for improving SRH awareness among adolescents

