

Research Article

Premarital Sex and Age at First Sex Among Collegiate Men in Pondicherry, India - Cross Sectional Study

Dr. K N Prasad¹, Dr. P S Vinoth Kumar², Ms. R Poovitha³

¹Professor, ²Post Graduate Student, ³Biostatistician; Department of Community Medicine, Shri Lakshmi Narayana Institute of Medical Science, Kudapakkam, Kudapakkam, Pondicherry -605502, India

***Corresponding author**

Dr K N Prasad

Email: drknprasad2@gmail.com

Abstract: Premarital sex and age at first sex information availability are limited in Indian context especially in South India. The objective of the study was to find the prevalence of premarital sex and age at first sex among young men studying in colleges in Pondicherry. Community based cross sectional study was conducted among men studying in Engineering, Medical, Degree, Diploma and Law courses in the colleges using pre tested semi open ended questionnaire. The prevalence of premarital sex (PMS) was found to be nearly 31 percent and mean age at first sex (AFS) was observed to be 18.3(+2.8) years. Premarital sex and age at first sex was earlier among subjects aged less than 20 years and Engineering students and sex with dating lovers. Further in depth study will highlight the facilitating reasons for such sexual behaviour among young men and women.

Keywords: Premarital sex, PMS, age at first sex, AFS, India, Collegiate adults, Community based, Cross sectional.

INTRODUCTION

The topic on 'Sex' is a taboo for discussion in the traditional communities in India in any age group irrespective of their educational status. In conservative society, pre marital sex (sex before marriage) is strictly discouraged in both sex and those indulged are doing such acts secretly.

Rapid economic growth, urbanization, extensive reach of media, porno films, X rated materials, abuse of substances like drugs alcohol, tobacco, having peers that are sexually active, family instability are considered as risk factor for sexual activity initiation among the youth men. The peer norms, peer pressures, higher levels of social interactions may be important factors for early sexual initiation and opportunity for youths to indulge in sexual activity. [1, 2] It is accepted worldwide that exposure to pornographic material is strongly associated with premarital sex. [1-5]

Premarital sex or partnership including those involving sexual intercourse are widely and culturally discouraged in urban and rural communities in India. The economic development, earning capacity and educational status are reasons for shift in age at marriage but not shift in the sexual maturity or urge. Reference literatures on premarital sex and age at first sex are not large in number among Indians due to

cultural factors, social stigma and non response rate for questions on their private life. [4-10]

It is important that identification of factors that inhibits or facilitates safe sexual behavior among the young men and women is an urgent issue. Information about premarital sex and age at first sex among unmarried young man in south India is very rare. Thus community based cross sectional study was planned with an objective to know the prevalence of premarital sex and age at first sex among young college going adult men in Pondicherry.

METHODOLOGY

Study design and period

A cross sectional, descriptive, community based survey was undertaken in Pondicherry among the collegiate individuals. The study was approved by the Institutional Ethical committee (Human studies) of the institute and conducted between .October 2013 to February 2014. The study has three broad objectives to cover the age at first masturbation, perception about their penile length, erection and age at first sex among men who had pre marital sex.

Survey Settings

The data for this cross sectional survey was collected from colleges of Pondicherry. There were 60 colleges consists of Engineering, Medical, Arts, Commerce, Business Management, Polytechnics, Science and

Law institutions in Pondicherry and about 4690 number were male students. Among the above colleges 16 colleges were selected to represent the each course so that the results will provide many details about the objectives of the study. The permission from the respective college administration and authorities were taken before starting the survey.

Selection of age group

The onset of age at first masturbation or solitary masturbation among male individuals starts either in early or middle adolescence period and few during late adolescence period. The majority of the subjects would have experienced the first solitary masturbation by late adolescence period and early adulthood. It is expected that the individuals may share or provide information about penile size, erection and quantity of semen during this age or after completion of 16 years. The response rate would be higher and able to understand the question on sexual activity of the men or recollect them. Hence the age group was selected from late adolescence period and young adulthood. The survey was planned to include the individuals aged between 17 and 26 years. Ten years group shows the similar behaviour and practices considering the exposure to similar socio educational background, cultural background, entertainment, media and environment.

Sample size and Sampling techniques

Sample size was estimates to be 686 including non response rates of 20%. A Multi phase, stratified random sampling technique was applied in selection of 686 sample subjects for the survey. In the first stage, all the colleges having different courses (Engineering, Medical, Dental, nursing, Science, Arts and Polytechnic) were listed. Colleges from each course or category were selected using the lot method in the second stage. Third stage included the selection of class /semester from each college as per the second stage by random. The list of the male students present in the lecture hall on the day of the survey was prepared and male students were segregated from female students.

Data Collection Procedure

All students in the class room were invited to participate in this survey by the investigators. During the class period devoted to the survey, investigators informed the students regarding the study with the objectives concerning their sexual attitude, activities and practices. Procedure for the survey was explained to the students in the local (Tamil) and English languages, assessing the potential respondents that the participation is voluntary and anonymous, assured them that their responses would be kept confidential. They were requested to share the information by recollection method on the variables mentioned in the questionnaire. The anonymous questionnaire was distributed to

students in the lecture halls along with Consent forms and requested to return the signed, completed anonymous questionnaire to a sealed box. No incentives of any kind were offered to the participants.

Data

Self administered survey instruments was anonymous in nature which was pre tested, semi open ended questions consisted of two pages questionnaire with 18 questions on 5 parts Socio demographic factors, sexual behaviors, sexual activities, sexuality perceptions and life style practices focusing on young adult men groups at the collegiate level of education was administered to all the voluntary subjects in the lecture hall. Anonymity regarding the name and place was planned in this study to get the correct and confidential information. Each questionnaire would take 15 minutes to complete by the students. If necessary, the investigators guided the subjects in case of doubt about understanding the variables.

Variables

The history of sex and age at first sex were primary variables and educational courses, resident status, supervision by parents, the first sex partner were secondary variables in this study. The degree category was included in the analysis of graduate students of Arts, Commerce, Science and Business administration.

Data analysis and Statistical tests

The data were analysed using SPSS version 20 for frequency, percentage, proportions, Mean, Standard Deviation, chi square test, Student 't' test and ANOVA test were used for analysis and significant level was considered at p value less than 0.05.

RESULTS

There were 686 subjects in this study and majorities are aged less than 20 years of age and engineering course students. The response rate for the questions on premarital sex and age at first sex was above 95 % in this study.

Nearly 31 percent (211 of 686) of total subjects gave the history of having pre marital sex as depicted in Table 1. The number of individuals having pre marital sex proportionately increased as their age increased. ($p < 0.001$) More than 60 % of men 2 among Degree, Diploma and Law courses gave history of pre marital sex. The differences in the prevalence of premarital sex was not statistically significant in these groups ($p > 0.05$). More number of urban residents and men staying with parents were indulged in pre marital sex behavior. The subjects having sex with the first partner was mentioned in Table 1 and the first sex partner being the dating lover (35%) among men of all age groups, 41% among engineering course students and 48% of urban resident men.

Table 1 Prevalence of Pre marital sex among the young men in Pondicherry

	Total	Yes for Premarital sex Number	Dating Lover	Commercial sex worker	Relative	Others	not mentioned
Age group in years							
<20	385	54(14)	25(46.3)	8(14.8)	7(13)	5(9)	9(16)
20-21	77	25(32.5)	6(24)	8(32)	2(8)	7(28)	2(8)
22-23	95	38(40)	14(36.8)	3(7.8)	8(21)	12(31.5)	1
24-25	72	53(73.6)	15(28.3)	15(28.3)	11(20.1)	11(20.1)	1
>25	57	41(71.9)	14(34)	5(12.2)	5(12.2)	16(39)	1
Education Course							
Engineering	334	61(18.3)	25(41)	11(18)	5(8.1)	10(16.4)	10(16.4)
Medical	123	8(6.5)	3(3.5)	0	2	3(37)	0
Degree	151	93(61.6)	32(34.4)	18(19.4)	15(16.1)	26(28)	2
Diploma	45	28(62.0)	6(21)	5(17.8)	7(25)	9(32)	1
Law	33	21(63.6)	8(38)	5(23.8)	4(19)	3(14)	0
Resident status							
Rural	282	58(20.1)	28(48.3)	5(8.6)	8(13.7)	11(18.9)	6(10)
Urban	404	153(37.8)	46(30.1)	34(22)	25(16.3)	40(26.1)	8(5.2)
Hostel							
Hostel	411	43(10.5)	16(37.2)	4(9)	6(13.9)	12(27.9)	5(11.2)
Home							
Home	275	168(61)	58(35)	35(20.1)	27(16.1)	39(23.2)	9(5.3)
Total	686	211(30.8)	74(35)	39(18.5)	33(15.6)	51(24)	14(6.6)

Number is parenthesis indicates percentages

The overall mean age at first sex among men was observed to be 18.3(2.8) years as shown in Table 2, however the mean age at first sex was 16.8 and 16.2 years among men aged less than 20 years and Medical course students respectively. The mean age at first sex was statistically significant among the different age groups subjects (p<0.001), however it was not

significant in other groups like education levels and resident status. (p>0.05) The non response rate for disclosing age at first sex was observed to be 17 of 211 (8 percent). The mean age at first sex was comparatively earlier with relatives as their partners irrespective of residential status and staying.

Table 2 Mean Age at first sex among young men in Pre marital sex habits in Pondicherry

Age group in years	Mean age (±SD)	Dating Lover*	Commercial Sex Worker*	Relative*	Other Women*	Others*
<20	16.8(1.7)	16.6(1.9)	16.5(1.8)	17.1(0.7)	16.7(2.1)	17.4(1.3)
20-21	17.6(2.0)	16.7(1.8)	16.8(1.9)	16.0(1.4)	18.3(1.9)	16.0(1.4)
22-23	18.9(2.5)	18.4(2.6)	16.7(2.1)	17.2(2.8)	19.4(1.9)	16
24-25	19.1(2.6)	17.1(2.7)	19.9(2.1)	18.1(2.8)	19.0(2.1)	20
>25	20.8(2.7)	18.5(3.0)	19.5(0.6)	18.5(2.1)	21.7(2.5)	0
Education Course						
Engineering	17.6(2.3)	17.3(2.3)	16.8(2.5)	17.0(0.7)	19.6(2.6)	17.1(1.6)
Medical	16.2(1.6)	15	18	18	0	0
Degree	19.8(2.6)	19.6(2.7)	19.7(2.2)	18.2(2.4)	20.9(2.7)	0
Diploma	18.6(2.6)	17.8(2.7)	17.8(2.8)	17.1(2.4)	19.0(2.6)	0
Law	17.8(2.9)	18.4(3.6)	18.7(2.3)	17.3(2.6)	18.3(2.0)	0
Resident status						
Rural	18.2(2.4)	18.7(2.8)	17.3(2.8)	17.1(1.2)	18.5(1.9)	17.5(1.4)
Urban	18.9(2.8)	18.1(2.9)	18.8(2.6)	17.8(2.3)	19.9(2.7)	17.0(1.8)
Hostel						
Hostel	17.9(2.7)	17.4(3.0)	16.6(2.5)	17.7(1.2)	20.0(3.3)	17.5(1.3)
Home						
Home	18.9(2.7)	18.6(2.7)	18.7(2.6)	17.7(2.3)	19.4(2.3)	17.7(1.6)
Total	18.3(2.8)	18.5(2.6)	17.6(2.1)	19.6(2.6)	17.3(1.5)	17.5(1.1)

numbers are mean age in years and numbers in parenthesis indicates ±standard deviation

DISCUSSION

The subjects from various courses in college young men were 686. The participatory rate in terms of giving information as pre marital sex and age at first sex was more than 95 percent.

The subjects were having pre marital sex with their dating partner (lover) is higher in number among men aged less than 20 years. The findings are similar to the study conducted in Delhi urban area.[4] The opportunity of having premarital sex with lover, commercial sex worker and other women was high among the group of 20 -21 and 24-25 years. It reflects the tendency of certain group of men could not control their sexual urge. Similarly the degree and diploma students had pre marital sex was higher in proportion compared to other courses. The reason would be their leisure activities, free mixing with opposite partners and reciprocating to the sexual advances shown by relatives and other women. The prevalence of pre marital sex was least among the medical course students reflecting the probability of fear about STD, HIV, other diseases and social problems. Residential status reflects the scope of exposure to the environment suitable to involve in sexual activity. The rural residents had higher number of premarital sex compared to urban area residents which is similar to study conducted in Pune. [1]

Worldwide the pre marital sex issue was different because of various cultural factors, exposure to social network, availability of pornographic materials, spending pattern of pocket money, staying with parents or supervisor, forceful sex or exchange for sex, alcohol consumption etc. The prevalence of pre marital sex was observed to be 26 to 93 percent in developed countries.[11] The premarital sex in developing countries was observed to be 53 percent with or without the influence of alcohol consumption, forceful sex and other facilitating factors.[6,10,11,12] The National Health and Family Survey report of India reports premarital sex among men was 9 to 13 percent, urban and rural area of Mumbai was 11% and 21% respectively, 16 to 36% in Pune and 23% in Patna.[6,9,13, 14,15]

The age at first sex as pre marital sex is different from age at first sex with their married partner. These are two different entities and this study addresses the issue as pre marital sex and their age at first sex. All the young men in this study were never married.

The median age at first sex was observed to be 20 years and the overall mean age at first sex during premarital period was observed to be 18.3(\pm 2.8) years and mean age was little lower among the men who had sex with commercial sex workers. Most of the young men who had first sex before their age of 17 years; however there was difference in the overall mean age of

their pre marital sex. The mean age was little higher for men when they have sex with their relatives as partners. The motivation for such habits like sex with relatives may be due to viewing of pornographic materials, sharing their leisure time with them, exchanging sex for money or sexual advances from the women. Similarly young men who enjoy more freedom find it easier to explore sex before marriage including the services of commercial sex workers. It is supported in this study that men who are not staying with parents had their first sex at earlier age with relative or commercial sex worker. This age is found to be similar to the African study in 2009.[12] It was observed that old sex partners play an important role in sexual initiation among young men.[15,16]

The age at first sex was observed to be a typical pattern among married men and during pre marital period was nearly 20 years. [11, 16] The global pattern of mean age at first sex among men was observed to be 16 years in Brazil, Peru, Kenya, Zambia, Iceland, Portugal and 18 years in UK and 19 years in Portugal Matt Rosenberg.[2]. In India it is observed 21 years in Maharashtra, 15-16 years in different parts of India,[3,6,7,8,9,15,16,17,18,19]

To conclude the pre marital sex among young men was observed to be 30.8 percent and the age at first sex was 18.3(\pm 2.8) mean years showing that the young men is likely to involve in pre marital sex at the earliest opportunity after sexual maturity under the influence of education course, freedom from supervision by parents, opportunity to reciprocate for sexual advances by women, relative or others.

Limitation

Underestimation or under reporting of pre marital sex and age at first sex cannot be ruled out in this study. Reliability of self report on sexual experience is matter of concern and difficult to assess the consistency of the data. The habits related to indulge in sexual behavior like alcohol consumption or forceful or opportunity etc was not collected in this study. It is presumed that the subjects were answered for sexual intercourse was meaning that it is vaginal penetrative sex or otherwise is not clearly known. Study did not mention the first partner for the sexual intercourse was whether the partner was opposite sex or same sex. There is social stigma attached in asking about lot of details on sexual issues in this community.

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