

Original Article

## Help Seeking Behavior of Adolescents at Kolar

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### Abstract

**Background:** Adolescents are full of energy, have significant drive and new ideas. They are a positive force for the nation and are mostly responsible for its future productivity, provided they undergo overall development in a healthy manner. **Aims:** To find the help seeking behavior of adolescents in an urban high community. **Materials and methods:** Fifty boys and girls in the age group of 13 to 15 years from an urban high school in Kolar were studied. A structured questionnaire was used to assess the help seeking behavior of the adolescents. **Results:** Among the adolescents reporting with psychological problems, concern with their physical height, weight and lack of concentration was more common. Among those identified with behavioral problems, lack of confidence and difficulty in maintaining peer relationship was more frequent. Health problems commonly reported were skin and eye problems, acne and general weakness. Boys reported more frequent psychological, medical and behavioral. Those residing in urban areas and from nuclear families reported more psychological, medical and behavioral problems when compared to those from rural area and from joint family. Majority of the adolescent girls approached their mothers for seeking help to their problems. **Conclusion:** Providing information and education to school going adolescents on their common health problems and providing help as per their help seeking behavior is necessary.

**Key words:** Help seeking behavior, adolescent, school children.

### Introduction

Adolescence is a transition phase of a child becoming an adult with rapid physical growth, physiological and psychosocial changes, development of secondary sexual characteristics and maturation of reproductive characteristics. About one-fifth of India's population are in adolescent age group of 10 to 19 years.<sup>[1]</sup> Adolescents' commonly report various health problems which are attributed mainly to hormonal changes. Most health problems reported are related to behavior and life style issues and more influenced by social setting than by health providers or the professional service providers.<sup>[2-5]</sup> Help seeking generally refers to the use of formal supports such as health facilities,

youth centres formal social institutions or professional care providers either in the public or private settings. In many cases help seeking is used interchangeably with health seeking service or remedies for a specific ailment or illness.<sup>[6]</sup> There is a need for attention on where, why and how adolescents' seek help and nature of help available to them in their specific contexts.<sup>[4,6]</sup> With this concern the study was undertaken so that adolescents' can be supported as per their need and problems.

### Materials and methods

The study involved a cross section of boys and girls purposively sampled from a high school in Kolar city. Fifty girls and boys aged between 13 to 15 years were administered a semi structured questionnaire in English to assess their help seeking behavior. An informed verbal consent from students, permission from the school administrators and institutional ethical clearance were obtained. The ques-

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-d their problems and the help sought by them for these problems. Data was entered into MS excel data sheet. Summary data is presented and chi-square test is applied to find the association between the demographic variable and their health seeking behavior.

**Table 1.** Distribution of psychological, behavioral and medical concerns of adolescents (n=100)

Health concerns	Issues / problems	No.(%)*
Psychological	Tension about career	19
	Height	33
	Weight	28
	Physical appearance	08
	Lack of concentration	30
Behavioral	Masturbation	01
	Inability to express feelings	13
	Hypersensitivity	24
	Feeling of loneliness	12
	Misunderstanding with parents	06
	Lack of confidence	38
	Attraction towards opposite sex	02
	Peer relationships	24
	Substance abuse	00
	Medical	
	Skin	21
	Eye	22
	Dental	15
	Ear	08
	Nose	08
	Throat	14
	Gastro intestinal	08
	Reproductive tract	01
	Menstrual	01
	General Health	
	Weakness	24
	Hair	33
	Acne	23
	Headache/ abdominal pain	21
	Backache	08
	Chest pain	05
	Obesity	10
	Fever	18
Injury	Injured	54

\* Since n=100, the % are same as the observed frequency

## Results

Fifty three percent of the studied adolescents did not perceive of any kind of health problem. Around 68% belonged to Hindu religion and 77% came from a nuclear family background. Table 1 summarizes the reported medical, psychological and behavioral issues and perceived problems of the studied adolescents. The important concerns related to the health and appearance of the studied adolescents were their height and weight, poor concentration and confidence issues related to their skin, eye, hair and acne. Most of them (54%) had injuries on their body (table 1). The studied adolescents commonly approached their parent and friends for solutions to their problems on health. Very rarely they have sought the help of a doctor for their perceived health problem. Parents were the most frequent source of information related to health as reported by the studied students.

**Table 2.** Distribution of adolescents according to the source of help sought for the problems

Help sought from	No.(%)*
Doctor	02
Friends	20
Mother	51
Father	05
Both mother and father	34
Sister	07
Cousin	04

\* Since n=100, the % are same as the observed frequency

## Discussion

Many of the studied adolescents reported with concerns related to their height, weight and concentration. They also expressed lack of confidence and issues related to maintain relationships with their peers. Among various health problems skin and eye problems, acne and general weakness were their common concerns. Parents were the common providers of help to their problems and also a major source of health information. Adolescent boys reported more frequent psychological problems, medical problems and behavioral prob-

**Table 3.** Distribution of adolescents according to source of health information

Major source of health information	No. (%)*
Television	25
Friends	20
School books	12
Magazines	10
Internet	05
Parents	51

\* Since n=100, the % are same as the observed frequency

lems when compared to the girls. Adolescents residing in urban areas and nuclear family had shown more psychological problem, medical problem, behavioral problem when compared to those from rural area and joint family. Majority of adolescent girls approached their mothers for seeking help. Few studies have also found that girls were more willing than boys to seek help from their parents and friends.<sup>[8,9]</sup> Various studies have reported that adolescents' seek help from parents, friends and school teachers.<sup>[7-10]</sup> Actual help-seeking behavior was positively related to willingness to seek help from various sources of support. However most of the adolescents' in school are having problems related to psychological, behavioral and medical aspects. It is necessary for the schools to have health care programs and counseling services for the adolescents.

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