



SIGNIFICANCE OF TEENAGE AWARENESS PROGRAMS IN SCHOOLS

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Adolescence is a crucial developmental phase that typically occurs during the school years and is marked by significant physical, psychological, and social changes. This period serves as a transition from childhood to adulthood, during which individuals attain sexual and emotional maturity. Because of these rapid changes, adolescents often experience curiosity about their bodies and relationships, which may influence their behaviour and decision-making.

The onset of puberty and sexual maturation may lead adolescents to experiment without adequate knowledge, increasing their vulnerability to risky sexual behaviours. Research indicates that early initiation of sexual activity is associated with a higher risk of unintended pregnancy among adolescents. Inadequate understanding and misconceptions related to sexuality, conception, reproductive health, pregnancy, and contraception are recognized as major contributors to teenage pregnancy.

According to the World Health Organization, adolescence is defined as the age group between 10 and 19 years. Globally, a significant number of adolescents aged 13–19 years experience pregnancy each year, with many resulting in miscarriages or induced abortions. In developing countries alone, approximately 20,000 girls under the age of 18 give birth every day, amounting to nearly 7.3 million births annually. When all pregnancy outcomes are considered, the magnitude of adolescent pregnancy is even greater.

School-based teenage awareness programs focusing on pregnancy prevention and early motherhood play a vital role in reducing high-risk and unintended adolescent pregnancies. These programs provide essential education on reproductive health, contraception, and life skills, thereby addressing critical knowledge gaps that often lead to school dropout, poverty, and adverse maternal health outcomes. Comprehensive sex education delivered through schools also helps students manage peer pressure, develop responsible attitudes, and make informed decisions regarding their health and future. Therefore, teenage awareness programs



are an effective strategy for promoting adolescent well-being and preventing early and unintended pregnancies

Significance of School-based nurse-led awareness programmes

- School-based nurse-led awareness programmes play a vital role in promoting adolescent reproductive health.
- Many adolescents lack accurate information about contraception, which often results in unintended pregnancies. Nurse-led education helps bridge this knowledge gap by providing reliable and age-appropriate information.
- These programmes also contribute to improved health outcomes by educating students about the potential risks associated with early pregnancy, such as increased maternal morbidity, mortality, anemia, and postpartum complications.
- Preventive education delivered by nurses emphasizes delaying sexual initiation, practicing safe sex, and avoiding high-risk behaviors.
- Additionally, nurse-led programmes are designed to address the social, economic, and psychological challenges associated with adolescent pregnancy. These include school absenteeism, dropout, emotional stress, and mental health problems such as depression. By tailoring interventions to adolescents' specific needs, nurses help reduce these adverse consequences.
- Empowering adolescents through education on puberty, reproductive anatomy, and consent enables them to make informed and responsible decisions. Furthermore, school nurses help create a supportive and youth-friendly environment where students feel comfortable seeking guidance and counseling.



- Services may be extended beyond schools to clinics and home visits, ensuring continuity of care.

Effectiveness and Role:

- Nurse-led interventions have been shown to enhance self-efficacy among adolescents, increasing their confidence in resisting peer pressure and preventing premature sexual activity. Higher self-efficacy is associated with reduced engagement in risky sexual behaviors.
- School nurses serve as key facilitators in creating a safe and supportive environment that encourages adolescents to access reproductive health information and services. Their presence strengthens trust and improves utilization of available resources.
- In the long term, such programmes help prevent the educational, social, and economic consequences of early motherhood.
- Global organizations, including the World Health Organization (WHO), recognize the importance of these interventions, particularly in regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, where adolescent birth rates remain high.
- Comprehensive programmes that integrate abstinence education with contraceptive awareness are considered most effective.

CONCLUSION

Worldwide teenage pregnancy is a matter of concern as approximately 16 million adolescent pregnancy cases are seen yearly, and 9 out of 10 teenage mothers belong to low- and middle-economic countries. Teenage awareness programs in schools are crucial for fostering holistic development, equipping students with life skills, and enabling informed decisions regarding physical, mental, and social well-being. Teenage pregnancy is a major threat to adolescent health globally which remains a challenging issue requiring urgent resolution over the world. Early childbearing, particularly among teenagers (those under 13 to 19 years of age) has negative demographic, socio-economic and socio-cultural consequences. Teenage mothers are likely to suffer from severe complications during delivery, which result in higher morbidity and mortality for them and their children.



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