

Challenging Gender Stereotypes and Sexual Harassment in Schools

Evidence from Adolescence Education Program in India

Introduction

The gender stereotypes begin from the very young age when children identify the gender characteristics as they grow up and learn about socially desirable behaviors for boys and girls in their daily interactions. Boys learn about behavior expected from men which in most cultures is synonymous with being physically and emotionally strong, being competitive, dominating and controlling others (Thomson, 2002). Girls learn that being submissive, shy, obedient and not expressing one's thoughts and feelings are desirable feminine attributes. Various experiences in day-to-day living reinforce gender stereotypes and thinking of masculinity and femininity. These notions not only reflect the traditional value of girls in comparison to boys, the compartmentalized roles and responsibilities that society ascribes to them but also affect access to education, health, employment, income within family and society (Krishnan et al., 2008; Sen & Ostin, 2007). The Youth Study (International Institute of Population Sciences & Population Council, 2010) conducted across 6 states in India in 2006-07 reports that 5% young women (ages 15-24) were allowed to visit nearby village/ neighborhood for entertainment in comparison to 58% young men in the same age group suggesting restricted mobility for young women. Among the young people in the same age group who owned a bank account, 54% young women compared to 90% of young men controlled its operation.

Gender double standards and power imbalances shape young people's lives and often undermine their ability to make informed and responsible sexual and reproductive health choices. Young people themselves often accept and sometimes justify double standards that condone and even encourage pre-marital relations for men but not for women. Findings from the Youth Study suggest that while 64-69% young men and women believed that a man's life would be ruined if he engaged in pre-marital sex, this percentage was considerably higher with regard to opinions about a woman's life (82-94%). Other gender role attitudes held by both young women and men- for example, that a woman must obtain her husband's permission for most things and that a man is justified in beating his wife on several matters also have

implications for women's ability to exercise choice in sexual and reproductive matters. A different set of gender-related factors underlie the vulnerability of young men. While young men are not subject to the stringent behavioral constraints imposed on young women, emerging evidence from a small number of studies indicates that the social construction of masculinity may undermine young men's decision making abilities as well as their involvement in care and support of their wives in sexual and reproductive health matters and their ability to adopt protective behaviors. (*Santhya & Jejeebhoy, 2012*). Evidence from a study conducted in India by the Population Council suggests clear linkages between inequitable gender attitudes and traditional masculinity norms on the one hand, and high-risk behaviours among men, including unprotected sex and gender-based violence, on the other (*Verma et al, 2006*). These inequitable gender norms curtail women's autonomy while expanding men's authority and control over women, affect the individual attitudes and behavior of men and boys, condone or justify violence and have been linked to adverse sexual and reproductive health outcomes (*Achyut et al, 2011*). Evidence from diverse settings suggests that people with conservative attitude towards gender roles are more likely to have multiple sex partners, lower rates of condom use (*Karim et al. 2003*) and more repeated symptoms of STIs (*Pulerwitz and Barker, 2006*).

In a patriarchal society like India, any initiative aimed at improving the health and well being of young people needs to invest in enabling them to understand the different aspects of gender-based discrimination and challenge the prevalent norms. In this context, it was plausibly hypothesized that discriminatory gender norms will encourage harassment of various kinds including sexual harassment. Harassment could occur in public spaces, work spaces, through Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and covers a range of sexually aggressive behaviors that could be verbal, non-verbal and physical. However, majority of incidents of sexual harassment go unreported. Even then, reported statistics are shocking and call for urgent action (*Prajnya Report, 2010*). In the Youth Study (2006-07), 76% young men and 66% young women in the age group 15-24 reported that their first sexual experience was consensual suggesting that a substantive proportion of young people experience coercion in their sexual experiences (IIPS & Population Council, 2010). The findings from a study conducted by Ministry of Women and Child Development (*MWCD, 2007*) in 13 states of India showed the pervasiveness of abuse among children and young people with 53 percent in the age group 5-

18 reported having faced some form of sexual abuse. Among the reported cases, 54 percent were boys and 46 percent were girls and majority of them were assaulted by relatives (uncle/cousins). The age-wise distribution of reported incidents of sexual abuse showed that though the abuse started at the age of 5 years, it gained momentum 10 years onward, peaking at 12-15 years and then starting to decline. Among those who suffered some form of sexual abuse, 72 percent did not report the incident/s to anyone. Incidents of sexual abuse go unreported due to victims' fear of being blamed, not believed, retaliation, shame and stigma attached to these experiences. In a research study fielded in schools in Goa, one-third of 811 students (53% boys and 47% girls) studying in grade 11 reported having experienced some form of sexual harassment in the past 12 months, most commonly from another student. Substantive proportion (35%) of the victims did not take any action against the perpetrator. It is also noteworthy that the study found that situations of risk congregate, i.e., those who were victims of sexual violence were more likely to have a poor relationship with parents, poor academic performance and worse mental health scores (*Andrew, Patel & Ramakrishna, 2003; Vikram Patel & Andrew, 2001*).

Evidence suggests that although individual attributes are important in preventing negative outcomes; a supportive environment- particularly a young person's family, school and peer network is equally important (*Alexander, et al 2007*). However, young people, in general, lack a safe and supportive family environment, a shortcoming that is likely to pose major obstacles to their achievement of good sexual and reproductive health and the realization of their rights. Parents often fail to serve as reliable sources of information for young people. Findings from a qualitative study with over 400 mothers and fathers of youth aged 15-24 in six states of India showed that parents perceived that such discussions went against cultural norms and that youth today become aware of these matters on their own. Parents are also concerned that communicating about sexual matters would lead children to engage in sexual activity (*Jejeebhoy & Santhya, 2011; Santhya & Jejeebhoy, 2012*). Not surprisingly, the Youth Study reports that fewer than 10 percent of young men and women had discussed growing up or pregnancy and reproduction related matters with either of their parents; the exception was the finding that 77% of young women had discussed growing up matters with their mother; and even this discussion was limited to the mechanics of menstruation (how to use the cloth) and behavioral dos and don'ts (*IIPS & Population Council, 2010*). Findings from a study fielded with

adolescent girls from select high schools in Delhi also suggests that 48% girls opined that it was not possible to talk with parents about sex and STIs (*McManus & Dhar, 2008*). Findings from a study conducted with parents of adolescent girls in both urban and rural areas suggest that while majority of parents in urban areas were in favor of sex education, majority of them in rural areas were not in favor of providing sex education to their daughters. (*Mahajan & Sharma, 2005*).

There is a universally expressed need among young people for sexuality education/ family life education across diverse scenarios, ranging from large scale surveys such as the Youth Study (2006-07) in which 82.5% young men and 78% young women in the age group 15-24 opined that this education was important for them to small sample studies with students within a school setting (*Unni, 2010; Thakor & Kumar, 2000*). However, it is worrisome that only 15% of young women and men reported receiving family life or sex education in school or through special programs sponsored by the Government or NGOs (*IIPS & Population Council, 2010*). Furthermore, findings from diverse settings suggest that young people consider school teachers as an important source of information on issues related to their health and well being (*Thakor & Kumar, 2000; Bhasin & Agarwal, 1999*).

In this socio-cultural milieu, the work on the overall health and development of young people is motivated by the recognition that these discriminatory norms should be challenged at the ages when they are being constructed to empower young people to recognize and challenge them. The school education system can influence and shape young people's thought processes, understanding of gender stereotypes and roles and use of violence. In school settings, students not only acquire knowledge but also imbibe values, develop an understating of social norms that finally influence their behaviors (*Dunne Mairead et al, 2005*). School education can play a key role in reinforcing or challenging gender stereotypes among young people (*Thomson, 2002*). School-based interventions are feasible and cost effective as school going adolescents comprise a relatively homogenous audience and are easily accessible in school settings. Schools also have a social standing and recognition as institutions of learning. Hence, implementing sexuality education/ family life education programs in school settings is likely to improve its acceptability.

Post 2005, in the wake of the controversy around sex education; the National Population Education Project (NPEP, 1980) was restructured by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (Government of India) with the support of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) as the Adolescence Education Program (AEP) that focused on enhancing life skills among adolescents to enable them to respond to real life situations effectively. Content of sexuality education has evolved over the past 2 decades from including only reproductive anatomy and physiology, including menstruation and safe period, prevention of STIs, prevalent myths about sexual behavior, conception and contraception (*Thakor & Kumar 2000; Bhasin & Agarwal, 1999*) to themes of understanding changes during adolescence and being comfortable with them, establishing and maintaining positive and responsible relationships, understanding and challenging stereotypes and discrimination related to gender and sexuality, recognizing and reporting abuse and violation, prevention of substance misuse and HIV/AIDS. AEP is participatory, process-oriented and non-judgmental, not prescriptive, stigmatizing or fear inducing program with its vision focused on empowering adolescents to understand and negotiate existing and constantly changing lived realities. Positioning AEP in the wider context of an educational approach to develop life skills to empower young people with a clear focus on age/experience appropriate and culturally sensitive information proved to be a useful strategy to reduce the fears, anxiety and politicization of this initiative.

Recent revisions of the AEP curriculum, the *Kishori Shakti Yojana* program or the Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (the SABLA scheme) and the University Talks AIDS program have great potential but the extent to which the approaches and content of these programs have been effective and acceptable to young people has not received much attention (*Santhya & Jejeebhoy, 2012*). There is insufficient evidence on young people's attitudes on gender and even more sensitive issues related to sexual harassment in India. Moreover, the evidence on factors affecting these attitudes is unexplored or limited to population groups in India. AEP evaluation survey provides opportunity to assess the impact of the program on attitudes of students and teachers on sensitive issues of gender stereotypes and sexual harassment. Situated in this context, the present paper attempts to:

- Understand the attitudes of school going adolescents and their teachers on gender stereotypes and sexual harassment

- Improve the understanding of factors influencing attitudes related to gender stereotypes and sexual harassment among school going adolescents and their teachers
- Assess the role of AEP in improving attitudes related to these issues

Study Design

Under the aegis of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and with technical and financial support from United Nations Population Fund, National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) co-ordinated the AEP between 2006 and 2010. The program worked through two national school systems- Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS) and Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) and select private schools affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education. The program worked on a ‘cascade training approach’ that created a pool of ‘master trainers’ who oriented nodal teachers. These teachers were entrusted with the responsibility of transacting life skills based education (16 hours module) to secondary school students through interactive methodologies. The program provided guidelines and materials to facilitate the transaction process to the nodal teachers. Advocacy sessions are organized with principals of participating schools and sensitization sessions are held with parents to promote an enabling environment. It is noteworthy that all the secondary schools in the KVS (919 schools) and the NVS (583 schools) were covered in the program until end 2009. However, the program reached out to only 2500 CBSE schools out of a total of approximately 10,000 schools.

A case-control evaluation survey of AEP was conducted in 2010-11 across 189 senior secondary schools selected in 5 states of India (Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Karnataka representing 5 different regions of the country, i.e., North, Central, West, East and Southern regions). Since all the schools in KVS and NVS were covered under the program, the control group was selected from CBSE schools where programme was not implemented.

Sample schools Per State				Total	Target Sample of Schools
NVS	KVS	PRIVATE			
<i>Case</i>	<i>Case</i>	<i>Case</i>	<i>Control</i>		
12	12	12	6	42	210

Selection of districts and schools: Female literacy and location of Kendriya Vidyalayas at district level that was easily available on the internet were used as the two criteria for selection of

districts.*¹ Based on the sample design, 12 Kendriya Vidyalayas had to be selected in each state. Representation of as many districts as possible was particularly important for the Navodaya Vidyalayas where there are no more than 1 school/ district. Hence, it was decided that wherever possible 12 KVs should be selected from 12 different districts. Hence, rather than choose between simple random or systematic sampling designs, a hybrid approach was developed to select the districts. Once the districts were selected, one school from each selected district was identified using random sampling technique.

A back up plan was also prepared, so that if there were no CBSE or NVS schools in the selected district, the next geographically contiguous district where NVS and CBSE schools were available was selected. It may be re-emphasized that a control group was not possible for KVs and NVS schools as AEP has been implemented in all the schools in both these systems. The CBSE control schools were chosen to be geographically closest to the CBSE senior secondary school in the sample. Only one section/division per class (for classes 9 through 12) was selected. The number of sections/per class/selected school was known before hand, the selection of one section/class was done apriori and centrally by the quality assurance team.

Development of survey instruments: Recognizing the fact that in the Indian context there were no easily available instruments for assessing life skills, i.e., applicability of learning in real life situations, a consortium of experts from relevant disciplines was created to develop the assessment tools. The core group developed both the quantitative and qualitative instruments that were validated by a larger group of educationists and practitioners with extensive experience in conceptualizing and / or implementing programs like the AEP. The study instruments were finalized after incorporating the feedback from the group of experts and field testing the instruments. In this study, we analyze findings from two 2 instruments:

i) Self-administered questionnaire for students: An objective, multiple choice questionnaire to assess students's knowledge, attitude and skills in applying learnings in real life situations through simulated situations/ case studies built around the expereinces of young people. There were 70 questions that were developed around different themes covered under the AEP. ii) Self administered questionnaire for teachers: An objective, multiple choice questionnaire to assess teachers'knowledge, attitude and learnings from AEP. Several questions repeated across the student and teachers'questionnaires to compare and contrast the knowledge levels and

¹ Districts are the independent administrative unit

attitudes between students and teachers across the same constructs/ themes. This paper analyzes responses from 21,967 adolescents in the 14-18 age group; 11,488 boys and 8,178 girls who were exposed to the AEP program and 1399 boys and 902 girls who were not. Responses from 1092 teachers are also presented here.

Ethical Considerations: Permission to field the assessment was obtained from the three school systems and the principals of the selected schools were informed by their respective school systems. Consent was obtained from every participant in both the quantitative and qualitative components of the study. The consent form was a part of the questionnaire and the survey team ensured that every participant had read the form and provided written consent before responding to the questionnaire. In India, school principals have the authority to allow assessment of ongoing programs without parental consent. Respondents were ensured anonymity and were free to refuse to participate in the assessment.

Quality assurance:

The quality of quantitative data was ensured in the following ways: **During the Field Work, i)** the respondents were observed during the administration of questionnaires and helped in understanding the questions and instructions, **ii)** Before taking the questionnaire back from the respondents, it was ensured that the identification particulars and consent sheet / form were duly filled, **iii)** attendance of students in the school register in the selected class was matched with the number of questionnaires submitted, **iv)** the field quality assurance team re-confirmed whether identification particulars had been duly filled. To ensure accurate, complete and consistent data, validity and range checks were done. Overall, the percentage of ineligible entries in both students and teachers questionnaires was less than one percent in all questions. Multiple entries in single response questions were less than 0.1 percent. Both these suggest good data quality. Furthermore, even on sensitive questions related to sexual harassment, the response rate is close to 100% for students and 98% for teachers suggesting that the findings are representative of the groups that they represent in this study.

Methods:

Attitudes on sensitive issues including gender stereotypes and dealing with sexual harassment are explored through plausible case studies. Each case study had 4-5 options to find out whether the respondents held strongly positive, strongly negative or ambivalent attitudes on

these issues. Multiple responses were allowed on each case study. The case studies were contextualized to resonate with the age and social realities of school-going adolescents in India.

The three case studies on challenging gender stereotypes explore the situations of a boy being fond of doing household work, an adolescent girl who is good in sports but is uncomfortable with physical changes in her body and embarrassed to pursue sports and twin boy-girl siblings who would like to become artists but their parents feel that it may be alright for their daughter to pursue art but not their son. Each case study deals with a gender stereotype prevalent in the society. The response options range from traditional to more progressive view points to manage the situation.

The three case studies on dealing with sexual harassment explore situations of harassment of girls in public spaces, in school in the sports class and a boy being abused by a relative. The response options range from accepting the situation to challenging it in different ways.

Two Indices on challenging gender stereotype and dealing with situations of sexual harassment were constructed based on three case studies in each domain (*see appendix*). By taking all multiple responses on these attitudes, we apply Principle Component Analysis (PCA) and develop indices for both teachers and students separately. First, we created dummy variables for each option given in case studies. As the nature of each variable became discrete therefore, we opted to use polychoric principal component analysis by using `<polychoricpca>` version 1.4 command written by Kolenikov and Angeles (2004) in STATA. `<polychoric>` estimates polychoric and polyserial correlations when variables are nominal or combination of nominal and continuous variables. `<polychoricpca>` performs PCA on the resulting correlation matrix. In the case studies which are taken to measure attitude related to gender stereotypes, we found negative scores in the positive statements on these aspects, which suggest the low level of gender stereotypes among who responded to positive statements. However, we interchange the signs of scores (positive viz negative) to make the index easy to interpret that is, the positive value of index reflects the progressive attitude on gender stereotypes.

Bivariate and multivariate analyses are used to better understand the role of select socio-demographic factors and importantly the role of the Adolescence Education Program on the outcome variables. Ordinary least square (OLS) regression model is used to examine the factors

affecting attitudes related to gender roles and dealing with sexual harassment separately for both students and teachers.

Independent variables: While running OLS regression for students, their age, sex, religion, caste, mothers' education, fathers' profession, access to internet and type of school (Case: KVS, JNV, CBSE; Control: CBSE) are considered as explanatory variables. Further, in OLS regression for teachers, teacher's characteristics such as age, sex, caste, religion, teaching experience, subject taught and type of school (Case: KVS, JNV, CBSE; Control: CBSE) are considered independent variables. Total sample of students and teachers is 21967 and 1092 respectively, which allow sufficient cell frequency in each category in the model.

Findings:

Profile of the student respondents: Majority of student respondents were between the age of 14 and 17 years and studying in senior school (grades IX to XII). There were more boys (about 60 %) than girls in the sample. Nearly 80% were Hindu. As expected, majority of students belonged to "other" castes (59%). However, substantive proportion of students belonged to Scheduled Caste and Tribes (21%) and other backward classes (20%). Eighty seven percent of students had access to internet. The majority of students' fathers were in salaried jobs followed by pursuing their own enterprise/business. Majority of mothers' of students had completed their secondary education. Nearly 35% students were studying in JNVs followed by 30% from KVs, 24% from case schools affiliated to CBSE and approximately 11% were from the control schools affiliated to CBSE. (Please refer to Panel 1 of Table 1)

Profile of teachers respondents:

Teacher respondents are more homogeneous by their background characteristics as shown in the second panel of Table-1. Forty percent and 32% of teachers were in the age group 31-40 and 41-50, respectively. Interestingly, 52% of teachers in the sample were females. Similar to the students, majority of teachers belongs to Hindu religion and "other" caste category. Thirty six percent have reported 11-20 years of work experience. Sixty five percent of teachers in the sample taught subjects other than Science and Math demonstrating that teachers from different disciplines participated in the survey.

(See table 1)

Programme and other factors influencing attitudes towards challenging gender stereotypes and dealing with sexual harassment: Results from multivariate analyses for students

The OLS regression results in Table-2 show that older students have statistically significantly more progressive attitudes towards challenging gender stereotypes (Coefficient: 0.03) and dealing with sexual harassment (Coefficient: 0.43). It is noteworthy that girls reported statistically significantly more progressive attitudes on challenging gender stereotypes (Coefficient: 0.33) and dealing with sexual harassment (Coefficient: 0.31). Findings also show that in comparison to Other/ General caste groups, students belonging to socially disadvantaged groups, including 'Other Backward Castes' (Coefficient: 0.03) reported statistically significantly less progressive attitudes on challenging gender stereotypes. Students from socially disadvantaged groups, including the Scheduled Caste and Tribes also reported less progressive attitudes on dealing with sexual harassment (Coefficient: -0.096). Interestingly, students with access to internet reported more progressive attitudes on challenging gender stereotypes (Coefficient: 0.05) and dealing with sexual harassment (Coefficient: 0.07).

Parents play a vital role in the upbringing of children and parents' attitudes are likely to influence the attitudes and behavior of children. Findings show that mothers' education has a key role in identifying these attitudes and children of women who had completed a college degree reported more progressive attitudes towards challenging gender stereotypes (Coefficient: 0.08) and were able to suggest more progressive strategies for dealing with sexual harassment (Coefficient: 0.21). In comparison to children of fathers' who did not have a job, children of fathers' in salaried jobs reported most progressive attitudes on challenging gender stereotypes (Coefficient: 0.12) followed by children of fathers in agricultural profession (Coefficient: 0.09) followed by children whose fathers had their own business (Coefficient: 0.05). Findings also show that children of fathers in salaried jobs also demonstrated progressive attitudes in dealing with sexual harassment (Coefficient: 0.12).

Findings also suggest that the Adolescence Education Program (AEP) has positively influenced the attitudes of adolescent students on gender stereotypes and sexual harassment. The regression coefficients for students studying in KVS (0.27, 0.34), JNV (0.08, 0.13), and case CBSE (0.05, 0.09) schools are statistically significantly positive for challenging gender stereotypes and sexual harassment, respectively.

(Table 2)

Programme and other factors influencing attitudes on challenging gender stereotype and dealing with sexual harassment: Results from multivariate analyses for teachers

Teachers play an important role in shaping the attitudes of students. Considering them as the key stakeholders for reaching school students; AEP works through teachers to reach adolescent students. AEP evaluation used the same tools to assess both student and teacher attitudes on challenging gender stereotypes and sexual harassment. An analysis similar to that done for students was conducted for determining the factors affecting teacher attitudes on the two outcomes. The results are shown in table-3. Findings suggest that unlike the students; teachers' background characteristics have lesser role in influencing their attitudes. However, like the students, female teachers reported statistically significantly more progressive attitudes on challenging gender stereotypes (Coefficient: 0.15) and dealing with sexual harassment (Coefficient: 0.34). Similar to the findings for the students, teachers belonging socially disadvantaged groups, (SCs/STs and OBCs) reported less progressive attitudes on challenging both gender stereotypes and sexual harassment although the findings were not statistically significant. An important finding from this sub-analysis is that AEP has contributed towards improving the teachers' attitudes on the above mentioned issues. In comparison to control schools, teachers in KVs reported statistically significantly most progressive attitudes on challenging sexual harassment (Coefficient: 0.24) followed by teachers in case CBSE schools (Coefficient: 0.21) followed by JNV teachers (Coefficient: 0.195).

(Please see table 3)

Discussion and conclusions:

The overall objective of initiatives that aim at gender equality is a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, rights and obligations in all spheres of life (UNFPA). Enabling adolescents to recognize and challenge gender-based discrimination, violation and harassment are important objectives of AEP aimed at improving the overall health and well being of school going adolescents. Using the data from concurrent evaluation of AEP, we analyze the factors influencing attitudes of adolescents in challenging gender stereotypes

and sexual harassment as the proxy for predictable behaviors when faced with similar situations in real life.

It is noteworthy that the sex of the respondent is an important determinant of their attitudes on the outcomes being studied. Responses from both students and teachers suggest that being a female is associated with more progressive attitudes on these issues. These findings are consistent with the Youth Study (IIPS & Population Council, 2010) reveals in compare to boys aged 15-24, girls from the same age group reported progressive attitudes towards gender roles. For instance, 20% of young girls in compare to 36% of young boys reported that educating boys is more important than educating girls; 24% of young girls in compare to 31% of boys reported husband alone/mainly should decide about spending money; 74% of girls in compare to 57% of boys reported that girls should be allowed to decide their own marriage.

In order to achieve the goal of a gender equitable society, it is important that boys also challenge the stereotypes on these issues. Hence, initiatives such as the AEP should make more concerted efforts to engage with boys on these issues. There is evidence to suggest that with context specific and culturally relevant investments, it is possible to change the attitudes and behaviors of young men in relatively short periods of time. Findings from the Yari-dosti initiative piloted in 2005-06 to promote gender equity among young men from low-income communities in Mumbai showed that the pilot was successful in reaching and engaging young men to critically discuss gender dynamics and health risk, and in shifting key gender-related attitudes measured on the Gender Equitable Men (GEM) Scale and also assessed through qualitative interviews with selected program participants (*Verma, Pulerwitz et al, 2006*). Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS) is also a successful example of engaging adolescents in the age group 12-14 that demonstrated positive changes in gender attitudes of school students exposed to the intervention (*Achyut et al, 2011*). Similarly, the population based intervention to promote youth health in urban and rural settings in Goa demonstrated that an intervention of 12 months could bring about significant decline in the perpetration of physical violence in the rural intervention communities compared to the rural comparison communities (OR=0.29, CI 0.15-0.57, p-value <0.001) among young people with mean age of 19 years. In urban settings also, similar findings were observed underscoring that it is possible to change attitudes and

behaviors related to gender stereotypes and sexual harassment among young people with appropriate interventions (*Balaji et al, 2011*).

Findings suggest that older adolescents have more progressive attitudes on challenging gender stereotypes and sexual harassment. The AEP is initiated in class 9 (ages 14-15) and messages are reinforced in class 11 (ages 16-17). Hence, it is likely that the older adolescents have better understanding of these issues. Access to internet which has shown to be related to more progressive attitudes on these issues may be proxy to adolescents being able to navigate through relevant information and secular trends around challenging gender stereotypes.

The findings suggest that higher education among mothers is correlated with more progressive attitudes among adolescents on issues related to gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment. Evidence from another school-based study with high school students in Patna, Bihar, India (*Shekhar et al, 2007*) also suggests that mothers' education has an important bearing on attitudes and behaviors of adolescent children. ,). Given the importance of mother's education in shaping the attitudes of adolescents, the program should invest in engaging parents particularly mothers.

The effect of background characteristics is consistent on both the indices related to challenging gender stereotypes and dealing with sexual harassment suggesting that having progressive attitudes on challenging gender stereotypes are correlated with progressive attitudes against sexual harassment across all the variables. The study findings are encouraging in demonstrating the positive role of the AEP in not only improving the attitudes of adolescents on issues related to gender stereotypes and sexual harassment but that of teachers as well. Findings from the Patna study also suggest that exposure to family life or sex education was associated with better knowledge on reproductive health issues in comparison to similarly aged adolescents who were not exposed to this specific education (*Shekhar et al, 2007*).

Findings from initiatives such as the Yari-dosti initiative suggest that in order to be successful with young people, both the content and pedagogy of the intervention are important (*Verma, Pulerwitz et al, 2006*). , Given that the transaction in AEP is also through learner-centric participatory methods could be an important reason for its effectiveness.

From the present analyses, this study is not able to explain the reasons for less progressive attitudes among adolescents and to some extent, teachers from disadvantaged social backgrounds (SCs/STs and Other Backward Castes: OBCs). Findings from the Youth Study (2006-07) show slightly different patterns for young men in the age group 15-24 with the largest proportion (63%) from Scheduled Tribes reporting independent decision making on selected issues including choice of friends, spending money and buying clothes, followed by those belonging to General caste (59%) followed by Scheduled Caste (56.5%) followed by OBCs (54%). Our hypothesis is that majority of the students from STs in this study were drawn from residential schools (JNVs) where there is likely to be more regimentation.

Findings from this study suggest that initiatives such as the Adolescence Education Program can serve as an effective intervention to challenge prevalent social norms on gender stereotypes and sexual harassment. With improving school enrollment and retention rates in India, schools can serve as crucial spaces to inculcate and promote progressive attitudes among young people to challenge discrimination and violation related to gender and sexuality.

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Table-1: Profile of students and teachers

Background characteristics of students			Background characteristics of teachers		
	Percentage	Numbers		Percentage	Numbers
Age			Age		
12	0.8	173	less than 30 years	13.2	144
13	3.7	821	31-40 years	41.4	451
14	22.3	4,907	41-50 years	32.1	350
15	28.0	6,153	more than 50 years	13.3	145
16	24.3	5,338			
17	16.7	3,666			
18	4.1	909			
Sex			Sex		
Male	58.7	12,887	Male	47.7	520
Female	41.3	9,080	Female	52.3	570
Religion			Religion		
Hindu	80.3	17,637	Hindu	79.9	872
Non-Hindu	19.7	4,330	Non-Hindu	20.2	220
Caste			Caste		
Other	58.9	12,931	Other	64.3	701
SCs/STs	21.4	4,695	SC/ST	15.6	170
OBCs	19.8	4,341	OBCs	20.1	219
Access to internet			Teaching experience		
No	12.6	2,776	Less than 5 years	16.1	175
Yes	87.4	19,191	6-10 years	24.4	266
Father's profession			11-20 years	36.2	394
Not employed	4.7	1,032	more than 20 years	23.4	255
Business	17.3	3,797	Subject		
Service	62.4	13,715	Science & Math	35.2	384
Agricultural	15.6	3,423	Others	64.8	706
Mother's education					
Non literate	10.0	2,188			
Completed middle	14.7	3,220			
Completed secondary	41.0	9,002			
Completed higher	34.4	7,557			
Type of school			Type of school		
Control	10.5	2,301	Control	9.4	103
KVS	30.0	6,583	KVS	32.2	352
JNV	35.2	7,722	JNV	32.4	354
CBSE Case	24.4	5,361	CBSE Case	25.9	283
Total	100	21,967	Total	100	1092

Table-2: Factors affecting attitudes among students: Results from OLS regression

Background variables of students		Gender stereotype		Coping with sexual harassment	
		Coef.	(95 % CI)	Coef.	(95 % CI)
age		0.030 ^{***}	(0.022, 0.039)	0.43 ^{***}	(0.034, 0.053)
sex	Male				
	Female	0.334 ^{***}	(0.312, 0.355)	0.312 ^{***}	(0.288, 0.336)
religion	Hindu				
	Non-Hindu	-0.017	(-0.044, 0.010)	-0.047 ^{***}	(-0.077, -0.018)
caste	General				
	SCs/STs	-0.022	(-0.051, 0.007)	-0.096 ^{***}	(-0.128, -0.064)
	OBCs	0.032 ^{**}	(0.003, 0.060)	0.016	(-0.015, 0.048)
Access to internet		0.047 ^{***}	(0.015, 0.080)	0.067 ^{***}	(0.032, 0.103)
Father's profession	Not employed				
	Business	0.050 [*]	(-0.005, 0.105)	0.014	(-0.047, 0.074)
	Service	0.138 ^{***}	(0.087, 0.036)	0.120 ^{***}	(0.065, 0.176)
	Agricultural	0.092 ^{***}	(0.036, 0.148)	0.018	(-0.044, 0.079)
Mother's education	Non literate				
	Completed middle	0.043 ^{**}	(0.000, 0.087)	0.089 ^{***}	(0.041, 0.137)
	Completed secondary	0.030	(-0.010, 0.070)	0.081 ^{***}	(0.037, 0.125)
	Completed higher	0.081 ^{***}	(0.037-0.124)	0.206 ^{***}	(0.159, 0.254)
Type of school	Control CBSE				
	Case KVS	0.265 ^{***}	(0.226, 0.304)	0.338 ^{***}	(0.295, 0.381)
	Case JNV	0.077 ^{***}	(0.038, 0.116)	0.128 ^{***}	(0.085, 0.170)
	Case CBSE	0.051 ^{***}	(0.012, 0.089)	0.095 ^{***}	(0.053, 0.137)
Constant		-1.262 ^{***}	(-1.416, -1.108)	-1.517 ^{***}	(-1.686, -1.348)

Table-3: Factors affecting attitudes among teachers: Results from OLS regression

Background variables of teachers		Gender stereotype		Coping with sexual harassment	
		Coef.	(95 % CI)	Coef.	(95 % CI)
Age	less than 30 years				
	31-40 years	-0.045	(-0.116, 0.206)	0.080	(-0.162, 0.322)
	41-50 years	-0.134	(-0.055, 0.323)	0.065	(-0.219, 0.349)
	more than 50 years	-0.121	(-0.109, 0.351)	-0.071	(-0.417, 0.274)
Sex	Male				
	Female	0.148 ***	(-0.232, -0.065)	0.341 ***	(0.216, 0.467)
Religion	Hindu				
	Non-Hindu	-0.002	(-0.098, 0.101)	0.078	(-0.072, 0.227)
Caste	Other				
	SC/ST	-0.039	(-0.079, 0.156)	-0.225 **	(-0.403, -0.048)
	OBCs	-0.049	(-0.058, 0.157)	-0.095	(-0.256, 0.067)
Teaching experience	Less than 5 years				
	6-10 years	0.156	(-0.312, -0.001)	0.169	(-0.065, 0.402)
	11-20 years	0.059	(-0.225, 0.106)	0.079	(-0.170, 0.328)
	More than 20 years	0.084	(-0.283, 0.114)	-0.017	(-0.315, 0.282)
Subject	Science & Math				
	Others	0.059	(-0.142, 0.023)	0.028	(-0.096, 0.153)
Type of school	Control CBSE				
	Case KVS	0.100	(-0.254, 0.053)	0.241 **	(0.011, 0.472)
	Case JNV	0.117	(-0.268, 0.035)	0.195 *	(-0.033, 0.422)
	Case CBSE	0.184	(-0.333, -0.036)	0.206 *	(-0.017, 0.429)
Constant		0.346 ***	(0.125, 0.568)	-0.792 ***	(-1.125, -0.459)

Appendix:

Case studies and statements for constructing index on challenging gender stereotypes	
1 - Rajan likes to do housework like cutting vegetables, washing dishes and cleaning. But when his friends come home, he hides this from them. He fears that the boys will tease him and call him a 'sissy' or a girl. Which of the following statements do you agree with? (YOU MAY CIRCLE MORE THAN ONE OPTION)	
Rajan should stop doing housework	
Rajan is right in hiding the house work from his friends	
If he tells his friends Rajan might be a good influence on them	
Rajan should feel proud that he does housework and not hide it	
2 - Kavita has been good in sports. Suddenly, when she turned fourteen she became shy and embarrassed to wear sports clothes, or to run, play or cycle. What do you think Kavita should do? (YOU MAY CIRCLE MORE THAN ONE OPTION)	
Wear whatever she feels comfortable in and continue to play, run, cycle etc.	
Stop playing as there is no future in sports for girls	
Discuss with her teacher or anyone she trusts why she is feeling like this	
Push herself to wear what all other sportsmen / sportswomen wear	
3 - Arif and Niloufer are twins. Both of them are good painters and want to become artists. Their parents encourage Niloufer but discourage Arif. They feel that Arif needs to think about earning enough to support a family in the future. What do you think? (YOU MAY CIRCLE MORE THAN ONE OPTION)	
Arif should give up art as his parents are right	
Arif should inform his parents that he will pursue his interest in arts	
Both Arif and Niloufer should explore study as well as career options as artists	
Arif should continue painting secretly	

Case studies and statements for constructing attitude on dealing with sexual harassment or abuse	
1 - Monica and Sabina go to see a film. On the way out of the hall, they are teased and harassed by a man who passes obscene comments. Your advice to Monica and Sabina would be to: (YOU MAY CIRCLE MORE THAN ONE OPTION)	
Confront the man and warn him :Unlikely/ circumstantial	
Seek support from others around	
Not go to see films in cinema halls	
Go with parents or brothers, who can protect them	
Complain to the cinema manager and insist they act to make the hall safe for women.	
2 - Mohit is ten years old. His uncle often comes over to stay. He brings lots of toffees and biscuits for him. He also insists that he will sleep in Mohit's room. At times he tries to touch him in ways Mohit does not like. Mohit's parents notice that he has become very quiet and withdrawn. Which of the following statements in your opinion are correct? (YOU MAY CIRCLE MORE THAN ONE OPTION)	
Mohit is misunderstanding his uncle's affectionate behavior	
Mohit's uncle is trying to sexually abuse him	
Mohit's parents should try to understand why he has become so quiet and withdrawn	
Mohit's parents should keep quiet and not ask any questions as this could upset the uncle.	
Mohit's parents should not let the uncle be alone with him	
3 - A male school games teacher frequently touches some girls longer than necessary while instructing them. He sometimes brushes their breasts. This makes them very uncomfortable. In your opinion the girls should: (YOU MAY CIRCLE MORE THAN ONE OPTION)	
Keep quiet out of embarrassment	
Talk to a teacher or parent they trust	
Make a complaint to the school authorities	
Discuss with other girls to find out if they have a similar experience	
Confront the teacher themselves :Unlikely	
Ignore out of fear of the teacher	