

Evaluation of Sexual Issues in Iranian Adolescent Girls (A Review)

Nahid Shabani Shahreza^{1,2}, Seyyed Jalal Hashemi^{3*}, Seyyed Mansour Marashi³, Abbas Amanuelahi⁴

¹ Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran

² McGill University as a Visiting Research Scholar, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

³ Educational Sciences Department, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran

⁴ Counseling, Department of Counseling, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Ahvaz, Iran

* **Corresponding Author:** Seyyed Jalal Hashemi, Educational Sciences Department, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran. E-mail: j.hashemi@scu.ac.ir

Received February 20, 2024; Accepted March 11, 2024; Online Published March 30, 2024

Abstract

Introduction: Adolescence is a tumultuous period during which teenagers grapple with sexual issues and desires stemming from this developmental stage that it may cause risky sexual behaviors. Lack of essential sexual knowledge and awareness can lead them to encounter various sexual problems. Therefore, sexual education is one of the crucial facets of upbringing that must be considered. Doing review studies can shed light on these issues for researchers and specialists in the field of education, enabling them to develop suitable curricula for sexual education and consequently contribute to reducing resulting crises.

Data Sources: Accordingly, the primary objective of this research is to analyze viewpoints and key, practical keywords in the field of sexual issues in adolescent girls through a systematic review of articles published between 2011 and 2021.

Study Selection: Based on the initial search results, 120 articles were found, and after a thorough review, this number was reduced to 17.

Results: The results indicate that sexual issues among adolescent girls are increasingly diverse and expanding. This means that compared to the past, when the sexual issues of adolescent girls were often summarized in simpler topics such as menstruation, today is different. Alongside the increase in discussions about sexual matters among adolescent girls, unfortunately, we witness a significant rise in their sexual problems.

Conclusion: Lack of sexual knowledge among parents and school teachers, as well as the absence of comprehensive sexual programs for girls in this age group and the lack of proper sexual awareness, are considered the main causes of these problems and examining and focusing on the sexual issues of this crucial stage in girls' lives can assist in achieving a healthy sexual life and avoiding serious problems.

Keywords: Sexual Education, Adolescent Sexual Foundations, Sexual Solutions, Adolescence

Introduction

The World Health Organization defines individuals between the ages of 10 and 19 as adolescents. It considers this stage a period of transition, growth, exploration, and opportunity.¹ Adolescence is a critical phase in the journey towards adulthood that requires careful attention and study. This stage of life involves rapid and often unpredictable changes that significantly impact the health and well-being of adolescents.² This important phase in life is a dynamic period of progress and emotional regulation skills develop during adolescence in some persons, while for others, adolescence is associated with challenges in emotional regulation and the onset or exacerbation of psychological and personality issues. Recent research indicates that the upbringing and how adolescents are raised directly

relate to the proper development of emotional management during this period.³ Therefore, adolescence is a turbulent period where adolescents navigate unmanaged and ever-changing emotional storms on their path towards stability and personal growth, which requires comprehensive education. This period marks emotional, intellectual, social, and physical growth.¹ Thus, it is essential to consider all emotional and psychological dimensions of adolescents because humans are multidimensional beings, and their all-around growth and development depend on comprehensive and continuous education. In the midst of this stage, they will show an increased interest in sexual matters and sexual relationships, making sexual health a prominent concern.¹ Attaining sexual health is a crucial factor in

overall individual well-being. Sexual health is a personal capacity that enables individuals to meet their sexual needs within legal, cultural, and social frameworks, free from any sexual issues such as rape, unwanted pregnancies, and even infectious diseases. Adolescents who do not acquire this skill are undoubtedly at risk of facing dangers such as rape, even from close associates.^{4,5} A significant portion of ethical problems in societies is directly and indirectly related to the lack of sexual health. Masturbation, illicit relationships with the same or opposite sex, rape, and incest fall under these ethical issues. The increase in sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS, despite strict cultural, health, and religious prohibitions, underscores the importance of human sexual desire and sexual education systems in addressing these concerns. Therefore, there is a need for proper education and upbringing to make the transition from adolescence to adulthood smooth and easy. Desirable education cannot be one-dimensional and must not ignore some aspects and features of the individual as a subject of education. These aspects generally include physical and material education, intellectual and rational education, moral, religious, and spiritual education, social and cultural education, political, economic, and technical education, emotional and sentimental education, aesthetic, artistic, and beauty education. Among these, a clear and purposeful focus on the biological and instinctive dimension of the human being and a focus on the subject of sexuality and sexual education are essential. Unfortunately, the taboo surrounding discussions of sexual matters with adolescents has led them to explore their sexual curiosity through improper avenues, such as explicit websites or immediate sexual experiences. The consequence of this is jeopardizing the sexual health of adolescents and ultimately leading to various physical and psychological harms. In this context, sexual education can help adolescents avoid getting entangled in sexual issues and problems. Sexual education in adolescence is perceived as a combination of learning experiences aimed at achieving sexual health. In this regard, this type of education during this period is focused on the content provided by school teachers, instructors from various institutions, and parents. It also extends to the community, including schools.¹

"Sexual education" is a comprehensive term for various educational activities addressing sexual issues

with the aim of enhancing sexual literacy. Sexual literacy means the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to protect and promote an individual's sexual health, rights, and well-being to achieve sexual satisfaction within the framework of social responsibilities."⁶ Farahani defines sexual education as including raising awareness about sexual risks and diseases, educating about religious duties, achieving sexual self-awareness, creating a clean environment, and warning against sexual abnormalities. Children and adolescents need to receive timely information about sexual changes through organized and structured education so that their sexual instincts develop naturally. Proper sexual education is effective in promoting healthy and stable families, proper marriages, and can impact an individual's social, moral, and ethical behavior. It introduces young girls and boys to their responsibilities in life and reminds them of social interactions between genders.⁷ However, some believe that sexual education is the transfer of information and sexual matters. Sometimes, sexual education goes beyond sexual instruction and involves using methods to develop healthy sexual traits and behaviors while eliminating inappropriate sexual traits and behaviors in humans.⁸ According to some perspectives, sexual education encompasses all the actions that occur from the early stages of human life to promote balanced and appropriate sexual motivation and behaviors. Its objectives include sexual information, assistance in the development of sexual behavior, helping fulfill sexual duties, the continuity and survival of the next generation, and achieving grace, affection, and tranquility in life.⁹ In Iran, there are three perspectives on sexual education. Some are against such teachings, believing that these matters are instinctual and self-taught. Others believe that such education is only necessary in specific cases and should not be taught in a way that undermines modesty and shame within families and schools. Finally, some view comprehensive sexual education as essential for preserving the health of children and adolescents and take various approaches to implement its elements.¹⁰ Lack of adequate and accurate information from parents and teachers can lead adolescents toward their peers. The question arises, where do peers receive their information? Nowadays, with the prevalence of the internet and social media, adolescents can easily access sexual information anytime and anywhere. Unfortunately,

with the rise of the virtual space and social media, informal sexual education is increasingly being distributed through various digital channels such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, etc.⁶ In our country, adolescents who cannot get answers to their sexual questions in schools or in the presence of parents are forced to rely on such facilities to satisfy their curious instincts, which can lead to sexual risks in the future. To address this issue, it is necessary to consider the concerns of adolescents.

To address important sexual issues such as early pregnancy, early marriage, and various sexual diseases, it is essential to first examine and study the existing sources to form a correct perspective on these matters. In many cases, adolescents obtain information from themselves, and due to social stigmas and fears from parents and teachers, they may relay incorrect information. Therefore, it is necessary to systematically review printed resources, such as articles, to provide more accurate information.⁴ Based on this, it is imperative to first examine and identify the sexual issues among adolescent girls in printed articles. After reviewing and identifying them, categorize these sources systematically. This approach can help shed light on these issues for researchers and experts in the field of education. With these findings, they can develop an appropriate sexual education curriculum and, as a result, contribute to reducing related crises. In Iran, various research articles have directly and indirectly addressed the issue of sexual issues among adolescent girls. The extensive and scattered nature of research in this field, along with the existence of non-scientific works, has made it difficult to form a cohesive picture of the scientific findings in this area. Therefore, one of the ways that can assist in making informed decisions about designing an effective sexual education program is a review of previous studies. Consequently, reviewing and evaluating the methodology and findings of scientific research can be helpful in creating this overall image. Furthermore, such a review can identify existing gaps and needs in this field for future research. Therefore, this research aims to review a collection of articles written in Iran within the time frame of 2011 to 2021 regarding sexual issues among adolescents.

While there are many articles and extensive research on sexual education, the innovation of the current research lies in its focus on a specific time frame and its examination of sexual issues, particularly among

adolescent girls. This is in contrast to the first article, which specifically reviews sexual education within a defined time frame, and the second article, which reviews related programs in sexual education. Additionally, the current research categorizes all sexual issues discussed in the articles, providing detailed insights, making it a valuable resource for other researchers interested in these topics.

Materials and Methods

The research methodology employed in this study is systematic review, specifically focusing on secondary research. Systematic reviews aim to provide a structured approach to answering research questions by comprehensively analyzing all relevant and credible evidence. This type of review involves searching for sources, using predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, critically evaluating the evidence, extracting and synthesizing data from the studies, and drawing conclusions based on the findings.

The Study Involves the Following Steps

1. Formulating a research question: Defining the specific research question that the systematic review aims to address.
2. Identifying relevant studies: Conducting a comprehensive search for studies related to the research question.
3. Evaluating and selecting studies: Applying predetermined criteria to assess the quality and relevance of the identified studies and selecting those that meet the criteria.
4. Data extraction: Extracting relevant information and data from the selected studies.
5. Data synthesis: Analyzing and synthesizing the extracted data to draw meaningful conclusions.

The study focuses on reviewing articles related to sexual issues among adolescent girls within the time frame of 2011 to 2021. The research clearly outlines its methodology, including how it accessed resources and the criteria used to select articles. The selected articles and the desired criteria for acceptance are explicitly mentioned in the study. The research also specifies the search terms used for finding articles and the databases utilized, which include scientific databases such as Noormags, Magiran, SID, and Civilica.

The initial search yielded 120 articles, which were then narrowed down to 20 articles specifically addressing

sexual issues among adolescent girls. The research concludes by presenting all the collected information in tabular format, providing a clear overview of the findings.

The articles have been classified based on keywords related to sexual issues among adolescent girls. The research primarily covers the years 2011 to 2021, during which more articles were found.

Data was extracted using standardized forms that recorded study design characteristics, participants, interventions and/or comparisons, and primary outcomes. Three independent authors assessed study eligibility, risk of bias, and extracted data.

Researcher Demographics

Both male and female researchers contributed to these articles, and their gender distribution was approximately equal. Researchers from various fields, including educational philosophy, psychology, curriculum planning, sociology, theology, and medicine, were involved in addressing these issues. Psychology and curriculum planning were the most common fields among the researchers.

Source Types

All selected studies are of the article type, specifically scientific research articles.

Main Research Questions

The reviewed articles generally approached the issue from three main perspectives: harm assessment, causes and therapeutic or educational solutions. Within these domains, the following questions were explored:

Harm Assessment Questions:

1. What is the sexual issue affecting adolescent girls?

Causes Questions:

1. What are the reasons behind the occurrence of such issues among adolescent girls?

2. What are the factors contributing to the increase in these issues among adolescent girls?

Therapeutic Questions:

1. What therapeutic methods can be employed to reduce these issues among adolescent girls?

2. What treatment methods can be used to eliminate these issues among adolescent girls?

Educational and Preventative Questions:

1. What educational methods can be employed to reduce these sexual issues among adolescent girls?

In summary, the reviewed articles provided insights into sexual issues among adolescent girls from various angles, including harm assessment, causes, and therapeutic or educational approaches. These questions helped structure the research and identify potential areas of intervention and prevention.

Results

Based on the findings of studies conducted at the national level, topics related to the sexual issues of adolescent girls can be categorized into 13 main axes.

Puberty

Puberty is one of the influential phenomena in the life of every adolescent, exposing them to psychological and emotional changes and upheavals. Research shows that many adolescents lack awareness of the changes occurring in their bodies during this period.¹¹

Misconceptions

Initial studies indicate a lack of awareness among adolescent girls, especially regarding issues related to menstruation. Many of them have incomplete knowledge about sexual health during this phase¹² Furthermore, some adolescent girls exhibit negative attitudes or indifference towards this issue. It's worth noting that various factors such as parents' lack of sexual education and the negative attitudes of some parents towards adolescent girls' puberty have contributed to these negative attitudes in adolescent girls.¹³

Impact of Teachers and Counselors

The inadequacy of resources, such as teachers in schools and counselors specializing in adolescents, can lead to confusion among adolescent girls. It should be noted that one of the other challenges related to adolescent girls' puberty is the lack of proper educational resources, which results in a lack of comprehensive content within a suitable framework.¹³

Serious Consequences

All these issues can have severe consequences for girls. The most significant consequence is the absence of a proper attitude towards puberty, which can lead to various mental illnesses, including anxiety and even suicide. The peak of mental and psychological crises intensifies due to the phenomenon of puberty. If an adequate educational system is not considered for

adolescent girls, they will bear heavy consequences. For example, many girls who have experienced this phase with difficulty face problems in their future relationships with their spouses.¹²

Importance of Parental and Teacher Education

Importantly, mothers and teachers who have a level of sexual literacy have been able to perform better in addressing these issues. Therefore, it can be firmly stated that to navigate the period of puberty effectively, all adults in contact with adolescents need to acquire the necessary education in this regard. This is crucial since adolescents themselves also need proper educational resources within a social framework to achieve sexual maturity.¹³

Relationship with the Opposite Sex

Sexual desires are considered a normal characteristic during adolescence. Positive sexual experiences can bring about positive sexual self-esteem, high sexual satisfaction, and the establishment of emotional relationships. Unfortunately, many adolescent sexual relationships come with risks to sexual health, such as various sexually transmitted diseases and unintended pregnancies.¹⁴ These sexual desires are due to the existence of sexual instincts in adolescents. Sexual instincts are an integral part of human nature that awakens during adolescence. Factors such as adolescents' unrestricted access to the virtual space and a lack of sufficient information to control these instincts contribute to the intensification of these instincts in adolescents, resulting in adverse consequences. The most significant consequence is early sexual relationships for adolescents, which subsequently lead to unfavorable outcomes such as unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.¹⁵ Awareness of sexual desires encompasses not only knowledge and sexual definitions but also includes sexual inclinations, desires, and feelings. This means that awareness of sexual desires directly influences the sexual choices of adolescents.¹⁶ The main problem in Iranian society is the lack of accurate and accessible information for adolescents. Information provided through schools in an academic manner or through parents in a principled framework, free from any negative attitudes, can help reduce early sexual relationships among adolescent girls.¹⁵ Therefore, sexual education can be an important and effective factor in preventing such relationships.

Masturbation is one of the common activities during adolescence and significantly influences an individual's sexual growth. This behavior is among the sexual behaviors affected by variables such as gender, age, religious beliefs, and cultural factors play roles in adolescent masturbation. Although the reports show an increasing trend in girls nowadays but the religious variable may lead to feelings of shame and guilt after engaging in this act, greatly affecting the adolescent internally. Studies indicate that adolescents experiencing anxiety and stress unconsciously intensify their acts of masturbation. Such individuals may face difficulties in their sexual relationships even in adulthood.¹⁷⁻¹⁹

Harmful environments are another significant variable that exposes adolescents to sexual issues. Adolescents who turn to pornography due to a lack of adequate information and then engage in inappropriate behavior are particularly at risk.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse of children and adolescents is defined by the World Health Organization as "engaging a child or adolescent in sexual activity without their full awareness and informed consent, against their will and innermost desires".²⁰ This act is not only morally reprehensible but also illegal and against societal norms. Unfortunately, sexual abuse is increasingly prevalent and a serious concern in society today.²¹ Sexual abuse has negative consequences for an individual's health, leading to various issues such as neurological disorders, mental illnesses, engaging in risky behaviors during adulthood, and even premature death.²² Victims of abuse in adulthood may experience various disorders, including sleep disturbances, social and marital relationship problems, different psychological conditions, and even suicidal tendencies. Many of them become entangled in addictions to risky sexual behaviors or various substances like alcohol and drugs during adulthood.²¹ Research indicates that many abused individuals lack the skills to cope with offenders effectively. Life skills are a set of capabilities that enhance adaptability and positive and effective behavior. Consequently, individuals can take responsibility for their social roles and effectively confront life's challenges without causing harm to themselves or others. Therefore, teaching life skills can be effective in boosting the confidence of sexual abuse victims.²³ These teachings, along with self-care

instructions and confidence-building skills, can empower adolescent girls to become less susceptible to this crisis. They can also enable them to react appropriately in dangerous situations.²³

Parents

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.²⁴ defines comprehensive sexual education as follows: "Comprehensive sexual education is an important factor during adolescence that provides adolescents with information on sexual relationships in various emotional, intellectual, mental, and social aspects. In this process, adolescents are equipped with the attitudes, knowledge, and values related to healthy sexual relationships, and the result is sexual health and sound sexual decision-making".²⁴

Parents play a fundamental role in providing comprehensive sexual education. However, studies show that there are many limitations in the relationship between parents and adolescent girls. Many parents consider discussing sexual matters with their daughters culturally inappropriate. In many cases, the relationship between parents and daughters is perceived as vague, one-sided, and overly authoritarian. In this type of relationship, most conversations revolve around instilling fear and dread in the adolescent girl, to the point where she becomes repelled by the topic altogether.²⁵

The main reason for this issue is that parents themselves lack the knowledge, skills, time, and even full confidence to transmit sexual information to adolescents. Many fathers have a minor role in addressing the issues of their adolescent daughters and delegate the responsibility solely to the mother, who may not possess sufficient knowledge and skills.²⁵

Studies indicate that the level of knowledge about sexual matters among many adolescent girls is severely lacking, and the primary reason for this is the inadequate transmission of accurate information by parents. Alongside this issue, the negative attitudes of parents towards such information exacerbate the problem. Designing and implementing educational foundations for parents, especially mothers, can help adolescent girls acquire awareness and sexual knowledge. Mothers who possess knowledge about sexual matters are effective in reducing sexual problems among their adolescent daughters.²⁶

Sexual Ethics

Sexual ethics refer to a state of physical, emotional, and social well-being regarding sexual desires. It is not only the absence of disease, sexual dysfunction, or physical disability but also the state where an individual can derive sexual pleasure free from any violence, coercion, or discrimination during sexual relationships. One aspect of sexual ethics is sexual abstinence, which means refraining from any form of sexual activity, including oral, anal, and vaginal intercourse, for a certain period.²⁷

Unfortunately, due to neglect and inattention to sexual ethics, many adolescents do not receive sexual abstinence education, and some may even face problems such as early sexual relationships.²⁸

The lack of attention to sexual ethics is increasing day by day. Today, with the advancement of technology, the prevalence of sexual arousal factors, and the widespread use of social networks and mass media, a sexual crisis has emerged, posing a serious threat to the lives of adolescents. Therefore, the need for sexual ethics education is greater than ever before.²⁹

The World Health Organization defines sexual ethics education as follows: "The alignment of an individual's mentality, thoughts, and feelings with a set of social and rational aspects that promote personal growth, create love, and establish healthy relationships for the individual".²⁹ Sexual ethics education can provide adolescents with rich and accurate knowledge about sexual matters and desires. It can also foster a mature attitude and insight in adolescents regarding sexual issues, ultimately leading to the acquisition of necessary skills for personal growth and self-development. Therefore, adolescents who embrace sexual ethics are more likely to practice sexual abstinence with ease and avoid early sexual relationships.²⁹ Based on this, we need to develop a proper program for nurturing sexual ethics in adolescent girls so that we can support them and reduce the problems and crises resulting from a lack of adherence to sexual ethics.

Reproductive and Sexual Health

Education and growth in reproductive and sexual health for adolescents are crucial factors for global public health.³⁰ Parents can play a significant role in transmitting sexual information to adolescents. In addition, research has shown that adolescents feel more comfortable talking about sexual issues in a school environment. Most adolescents receive information

not only from teachers but also from their peers. However, if these sources provide incomplete information, adolescents may undoubtedly face crises such as unintended pregnancies and failure to maintain their sexual health during menstruation, leading to various uterine diseases.³¹ Therefore, we should initially provide educational programs for parents and teachers to teach them how to address the crises resulting from inadequate reproductive and sexual health. Adolescent girls who have access to this education will undoubtedly be less susceptible to uterine diseases and various infections resulting from poor hygiene as they grow older.³²

Mass Media

Media are communication tools that are widely accessible to people and have a significant influence on them. These tools are divided into five categories: print media, including newspapers and magazines; mass media such as radio and television; and finally, media outside the home and the internet. Among all media, the internet is the fastest and most accessible tool widely used in societies.³³

Research indicates a lack of quality sexual information in such mass media. Individuals can easily share their own sexual information and videos with others in the virtual space, and unfortunately, there is no supervision over them. Even many self-proclaimed experts share ineffective information in the virtual space. In some cases, many of them do not update their information or do not have comprehensive information to cover all segments of society. For example, 45% of YouTube videos on AIDS are very misleading.³⁴

Furthermore, inappropriate content such as pornography in other films placed in virtual spaces can be considered another dangerous factor in shaping the sexual receptiveness of adolescents. This does not mean that mass media only plays a negative role; it can also serve as a useful tool in sexual education.

There are many useful ways to expand sexual education in the media. For example, television can showcase various useful programs related to sexual education. Famous individuals can encourage people through the media and virtual space to educate their children about sexuality. Radio programs can also be used to discuss psychological issues related to children and adolescents' sexual matters. We must utilize all media, including websites, to educate society that

sexual matters are not taboo and are a vital necessity for protecting children and adolescents.³³

Another positive approach in utilizing mass media is controlling adolescents' use of these tools. This control can be implemented in various ways. By providing abundant recreational and engaging activities, adolescents are less likely to turn to these tools. Furthermore, if parents and schoolteachers increase their sexual knowledge, they can meet adolescents' needs. Consequently, adolescents will consider parents and teachers as their primary sources of information, reducing their reliance on the internet as an essential source of information.³⁵

Runaway Girls

It is challenging to provide accurate statistics on the number of runaway adolescents, but approximately, it can be said that around 6% to 7% of adolescents leave their homes and spend time on the streets annually. According to statistics from the Social Emergency Center of Iran, around 3,000 girls and women left their homes for good in 2017. This happened when adolescent girls intentionally ran away from their homes, spent at least one night outside, and many of them never returned home.³⁶

Research indicates that running away from home significantly affects the adolescent growth process. Many of them get involved in various infectious diseases, mental issues, and even substance abuse. Some may engage in multiple sexual relationships to meet their basic needs, and in most cases, these individuals end up homeless in adulthood.³⁶

Several factors contribute to adolescent girls running away from home. Constant parental conflicts and improper handling of adolescent demands are the main drivers of this phenomenon. Toxic parental relationships, including divorce, can also be considered significant factors in running away from home. Sometimes, adolescents resort to this action due to academic underachievement and not having an appropriate place in school. Many others run away from home due to educational dropout resulting from financial poverty.³⁶

The first step in reducing the harm to runaway adolescents is for the government to provide facilities to meet their basic needs, aiming to keep them less involved in external issues. Furthermore, the most crucial factor is monitoring the child-rearing process. Establishing legal barriers to child abuse within

families can be a significant factor in reducing the escape of adolescent girls. At the same time, educating parents to foster proper interaction with adolescents and educating adolescents to expand their knowledge about the risks resulting from these actions and even the necessary sexual education can help adolescents turn the crises they face during adolescence into opportunities for growth, reaching their physical and spiritual maturity.³⁷

Sports

One of the influential factors on adolescent sexual behavior during adolescence is their participation in sports activities. Research indicates that sports have a direct relationship with reducing sexual activity and risky sexual behaviors. Therefore, sports play a strategic role in preventing sexual vulnerability.³⁸

However, one unfortunate event that can occur in sports for adolescents is sexual violence. Research shows that sexual violence in sports among adolescents is increasing in the present century. Various factors are involved in this phenomenon, but the most prominent factor is the position of some adults with whom adolescents have contact during sports. Adults who hold positions of power, trust, and support in the eyes of adolescents can establish dangerous sexual relationships with adolescents by abusing this position. The main factor involved in these events is the lack of awareness and adequate understanding of adolescents.³⁹

Other factors that sports can affect include the psychological stress and pressures that arise in the competitive environment for adolescent girls. The lack of necessary mental awareness in adolescents to cope with such pressures and their tendency to engage in risky relationships with the opposite sex as a result. Therefore, the best solution is to provide appropriate sexual education to adolescents to control and manage their behavior in risky situations. Adolescents who learn various aspects such as sexual self-esteem, self-control, and even emotional and emotional management can perform correctly in sports environments. Alongside this, sports environments need to be managed in a way to reduce the creation of such pressures.³⁸

Computer Games

Computer games are now recognized as a global form of entertainment. However, their perception and

role can vary widely from country to country. In some countries, they are considered a primary form of entertainment, while in others, they are seen as competitive sports. Nevertheless, in many countries, they are still primarily associated with a specific demographic, such as men. However, there is an increasing trend of girls participating in these games.⁴⁰

The most common characteristic of these games is their highly competitive nature, often using explicit language and highly sexualized scenes to attract viewers. Adolescent girls who become familiar with sexual issues at an early age during these games, combined with the sexualized environment prevalent throughout the gameplay, can lead adolescents to develop same-sex tendencies and inclinations towards such issues, resulting in serious consequences. Premature sexual maturation, an excessive inclination towards sexual relations with the opposite gender, and ultimately addiction is some of the consequences for adolescents due to their early and inappropriate exposure to certain sexual terms and visuals in these games.

The most crucial step parents can take for their adolescents is to limit their exposure to such games as much as possible. Parents should provide alternative activities for adolescents to keep them less engaged in such games. Moreover, parents should educate adolescents about sexual matters so that they can be vigilant about the sexual fantasies depicted in these games, knowing that reality is something entirely different. Therefore, promoting sexual literacy and sexual education among adolescents can help reduce the crises resulting from these types of games.³⁸

Child Marriage Among Adolescent Girls

Child marriage, also referred to as early marriage, is a serious violation of human rights and a harmful practice that exposes children to the risks of violence, exploitation, and abuse. Child marriage involves the formal or informal union in which one or both parties are under the age of 18.⁴¹

Unfortunately, child marriage is deeply rooted in traditions and misconceptions and is more prevalent among girls, significantly undermining girls' interests in various aspects. In Iran, the culture of child marriage is accepted among Iranian families, and many of them engage in it without any awareness of the sexual issues related to marriage. Consequently,

this leads to problems such as early-age pregnancies, psychological illnesses like depression, and even various infectious diseases due to a lack of sexual health awareness.

Country-specific laws accepting child marriage facilitate this process among adolescent girls. Therefore, the first step is to reform laws and make child marriages more difficult. Secondly, different educational packages should be provided to families. Alongside parental education, educating adolescents about sexual issues should be a top priority. Adolescents who learn the necessary skills can make more rational choices and avoid sexual problems during their married life.⁴²

Religion and Sexual Behavior

Religiosity has a direct relationship with sexual attitudes and behaviors. Research has shown that religion has a direct impact on the sexual attitudes and behaviors of women. Women with a religious inclination tend to exhibit more conservative sexual

behaviors and are less likely to accept liberal or permissive attitudes. Additionally, adolescents who do not grow up in religious families have shown a tendency towards early sexual experiences compared to their peers.⁴³

Religion can provide a meaningful system that includes purpose in life, positive self-worth, and a sense of self-respect. This meaningful system can deter individuals from engaging in risky behaviors. Therefore, with an increase in religiosity among individuals, the inclination towards risky sexual behavior decreases. Unfortunately, due to significant changes in various levels of society and a decrease in adolescents' adherence to religious matters, the inclination towards risky sexual behaviors is on the rise. Creating religious education packages to reduce risky behaviors during adolescence is the only solution. Therefore, there is a need for appropriate sexual education within a religious framework to guide adolescents towards higher goals in life and ultimately reduce the risks associated with a lack of sexual knowledge.⁴⁴

Table 1. Information and Results of the Studies on Sexual Issues among Adolescent Girls

Title	Foundations	Causes	Consequences	Methods	Preventive Solutions	Authors	Year
1. Challenges of Health Education on Adolescence for Adolescent Girls in Iran: A Priority for School-Based Interventions for Girls and Mothers	Adolescent Health, Challenges in Adolescent Health Education	Lack of sufficient awareness and desirable attitudes and behaviors, weak educational resources, lack of suitable and comprehensive educational content, inappropriate teaching methods	Unhealthy behaviors, misinformation, fear, anxiety, negative attitudes leading to anxiety	Literature review, education on adolescent health, education on psychological and physical changes during adolescence, creating an effective educational program on attitudes toward adolescence	Educational programs on adolescent health, education on psychological and physical changes during adolescence, creating an effective educational program on attitudes toward adolescence	Zeinab Ali Moradi, Masoumeh Simbar	2014 (1393)
2. The Role of Adolescent Education in the Curriculum of the First Year of Junior High School with an Emphasis on Girls' Adolescence	The Position of Adolescent Education in Textbooks	The highest number of references to adolescence in textbooks is related to religious and cultural aspects, lack of sufficient and proper education for adolescent girls in Iran, incorrect beliefs and culture about girls' adolescence	Psychological problems, infectious diseases, unsuccessful marriages, risky early pregnancies, physical and mental problems in adulthood	Qualitative content analysis	Effective and appropriate educational program on physical and sexual aspects of adolescence	Fahimeh Sha'bani, Afsaneh Naraghi Zadeh, Dr. Parvin Ahmadi	2019 (1398)
3. Qualitative Exploration of Factors Driving Adolescent	Masturbation in Adolescent Girls	Environmental communication factors such as communication challenges with	Predisposition to develop harmful habits that can affect the future sexual life of girls in terms of	Qualitative research based on a family-centered sexual	Empowering families, facilitating parent-adolescent	Mohsen Asghari Nakha, Zahra Migrant	2020 (1399)

Title	Foundations	Causes	Consequences	Methods	Preventive Solutions	Authors	Year
Girls towards Masturbation from the Perspective of the Family-Centered Sexual Education Model Based on Growth		parents, family stressors, unlimited communication with the opposite sex, psychological factors such as sexual fantasies, incorrect beliefs about masturbation, harm in virtual spaces, addiction to pornography, and social factors such as a harmful social environment, educational level, and economic well-being	marriage and motherhood	education model derived from scientific foundations, family education programs in schools, national media, and counseling clinics	dialogues about adolescence	Badi	
4. Determining the Effectiveness of Life Skills Education on Improving the General Health and Confidence of Adolescent Girls Experiencing Sexual Abuse	Sexual Abuse of Adolescent Girls	Taboos about sexual issues in Iran, the victim	Psychological problems in the long term, sexual dysfunction, anxiety, low self-esteem, self-harming tendencies, suicidal thoughts	Qualitative research	Life skills education and its impact on general health and confidence of adolescent girls,	Maryam Bagheri Panah, Farhad Jamshidi	2019 (1398)
5. The Effectiveness of Directive Mental Imagery and Reprocessing Therapy on Nightmares and Suicidal Behaviors in Girls with a History of Sexual Abuse	Effectiveness of Mental Imagery and Reprocessing Therapy on Nightmares in Traumatized Girls	Individuals who experience sexual abuse and assault	Nightmares, insomnia, anxiety, fear, suicidal thoughts	Interviews	Mental imagery and Reprocessing Therapy (IRRT)	Morteza Tarkhan	2016 (1395)
6. Qualitative Study of Mothers' Experiences in Teaching Sexual Issues to Adolescent Girls with an Emphasis on Cultural Factors	Deep Understanding of Mothers' Experiences in Teaching Sexual Issues to Their Daughters	Inadequate maternal knowledge in teaching sexual issues, failure to provide accurate information, neglecting sexual education for adolescent girls, negative parental attitudes towards sexual education for girls	Limited knowledge of girls about puberty, correct attitudes and behaviors towards it	Qualitative (Phenomenological)	Designing and implementing educational interventions to increase mothers' awareness and the need for coordination and collaboration between home and school for better results, changing social attitudes, and increasing parents' knowledge	Elahe Abedini, Zahra Tayebi, Parisa Ziaei, Shiva Zareh Zadeh	2016 (1395)
7. Identification and Prioritization of Messages	Identification of Effective Messages on Sexual Self-	Neglect and indifference of textbooks towards	Emergence of sexual and deviant behaviors in	Descriptive-survey	Developing suitable and effective content to	Zahra Eslamian, Zahra Mahmoud Saeedi, Abolfazl	2019 (1398)

Title	Foundations	Causes	Consequences	Methods	Preventive Solutions	Authors	Year
Related to Sexual Self-Esteem of Students	Esteem, Identification of Effective Factors on Sexual Ethics	adolescent sexual ethics, lack of relevant educational programs,	adolescents, emergence of risky sexual relationships in adolescents		enhance sexual ethics in adolescents, highlighting the benefits of sexual self-esteem for adolescents in the future	Ghaffari	
8. The Mediating Role of Personal Values in Predicting Sexual Self-Esteem Based on the Mother-Daughter Relationship, Islamic Ethics, and Spiritual Intelligence in Female Students in Isfahan City.	Effective Factors on Female Sexual Self-Esteem	Emotional neglect of parents, especially mothers	Developing feelings of insecurity, anxiety, and eventually being drawn to risky relationships	Analytical (Descriptive-Inferential)	Sexual ethics education, teaching human values,	Mohammad Soltanizadeh, Zahra Lotfi, Mahnaz Afyouni Akbari	2018 (1397)
9. Iranian Adolescent Girls and Information and Health Services on Fertility and Sexuality: A Qualitative Study	Providing Information and Health Services on Fertility and Sexuality to Adolescent Girls	Lack of sufficient knowledge about fertility-related topics, easy access to unreliable information, cultural and social changes in society, increased risky behaviors among adolescents, cultural taboos	Emergence of numerous sexual problems, the occurrence of physical and sexual diseases in adulthood, exposure to negative consequences of fertility and sexuality, such as sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS	Qualitative (Phenomenological)	Creating parental education programs on sexual issues for adolescent girls, providing sexual and fertility information to adolescent girls,	Khadijeh Mirzaei, Rahleh Babazadeh, Mohammad Shariati, Abbas Mousavi	2014 (1393)
10. Confronting Explicit Sexual Content (Pornography) on the Internet and Virtual Space and Its Behavioral Effects on Adolescents in Tehran	Impact of Access to Virtual Space on Adolescent Sexual Behaviors	Widespread access of adolescents to virtual space, weakening parent-child relationships, increased sexual discourse among adolescents, lack of proper sexual health education in schools	Reduced desire for marriage and increased premarital sexual relationships, increased alcohol consumption, masturbation	Exploratory Qualitative Research (Phenomenological)	Increasing media literacy and sexual health literacy among adolescents, facilitating sexual discourse in schools and families	Farideh Khalaj Abadi Farahani	2019 (1398)
11. Study of the Family Situation of Runaway Girls with an Emphasis on Their Abuse	Study and Causes of Girls Running Away from Home	Cold family relationships, neglecting the needs of adolescents, lack of sufficient parenting skills, sexual abuse of children and	Begging in society, prostitution, theft	Random Sampling	Providing necessary education to parents, expanding adolescents' knowledge in schools, creating	Saghar Ebrahimi, Matin Khatibzadeh	2013 (1392)

Title	Foundations	Causes	Consequences	Methods	Preventive Solutions	Authors	Year
		adolescents by family members or close relatives, having a sexual relationship with a boyfriend			suitable employment for girls who have run away from home by the government, creating legal barriers for child abuse in families		
12. The Effect of Sports on the Sexual Risk-Taking of High School Students in Tehran	The Effect of Sports and Related Variables on Sexual Risk-Taking	Stress and psychological pressure in competitive environments, weakening values and norms in non-professional sports environments, lack of education and mental readiness to deal with sexual risk, organization and policy-making of school sports	Increased inclination towards friendship with the opposite sex and inclination towards sexual relationships	Content Analysis with a Purpose	Controlling access to inappropriate computer games for girls	Zahra Ahmadi Abadi, Ali Zadeh Mohammadi	2012 (1391)
13. Pink and Dreamy Games of Girlhood: A Qualitative Study of Sexual Capital Presented in Girls' Computer Games	Impact of Computer Games on Girls' Sexual Issues	Girls' access to inappropriate sexual computer games, adolescent girls becoming familiar with sexual issues and relationships with the opposite sex through inappropriate computer games, the spread of consumer culture	Premature sexual relationships, early maturity, reduced self-esteem	Directional Content Analysis	Controlling access to these games for girls and monitoring their access to them	Hananeh Ahmadi, Samaneh Mehrparvar	2018 (139)
14. Sexual Taboos and Influencing Factors	Assessing the Prevalence of Sexual Taboos in Adolescents, Measuring Limitations in Sexual Topics	Cultural, social, and political barriers in society related to sexual topics, lack of awareness among parents about transferring sexual information to children, the presence of sexual taboos between parents and children	Creating conflicts and differences in sexual issues	Cluster Sampling, Descriptive, Cohesive, Qualitative	Increasing general and specialized knowledge in society about sexual issues, holding scientific congresses on sexual issues and publishing research by experts, sexual education of parents and adolescents	Hossein Abolhasan Tanaei, Zahra Ghasemi, Shirin Asadollahi	2012 (1391)
15. The Life Experience of Adolescent Girls in the Role of Early Marriage (A Study of Early Marriage in	Reasons for Early Marriage in Adolescent Girls and its Consequences	Lack of sufficient education on marriage, sexual issues, and pregnancy for adolescent girls, lack of full discretion in	Occurrence of physical and psychological problems, undermining the foundations of families in Iran, increased	Analysis, Qualitative	Holding various family education classes and life skills during school, revising laws related to the	Hananeh Safavi, Mahgol Minaii	2015 (1394)

Title	Foundations	Causes	Consequences	Methods	Preventive Solutions	Authors	Year
Aran and Bidgol Girls)		choosing the age of marriage among adolescent girls, acceptance of early marriage in Iranian culture, existence of civil laws allowing early marriage for adolescent girls	abortion due to ignorance of protected sexual intercourse		minimum age of marriage, completing the minimum educational period for girls, and obtaining a high school diploma		
16. The Relationship Between Religious Orientation and Demographic Factors with Tendencies Towards Violence and Risky Sexual Behavior in Female and Male Students	The Effect of Religion on Reducing Risky Relationships in Adolescents	Very significant changes in society, lack of religious belief in some adolescents,	Increase in non-conventional relationships and risky relationships	Sampling, Analysis	Creating religious education to reduce risky relationships and control instincts in adolescents	Masoud Asadi, Salar Rezaei, Nejad, Mirnader Miri	2011 (1390)
17. Media and Women's Attitudes Toward Their Sexual Identity	The Impact of Media on Adolescents' Risky Sexual Relationships and Their Sexual Imagery	Excessive access of adolescent girls to media with sexual images, instrumental use of girls in the media and magazines, increased sexualization in the media	Increased sexual arousal, increased negative feelings about their own sexuality, decreased self-esteem	Analytical	Controlling media viewing among adolescent girls	Mohammad Reza Hatami, Saroyeh Mozhabi	2011 (1390)

Discussion

Adolescents have a strong inclination to break through limitations and experience new behaviors. They often view themselves as invincible and are drawn towards risky behaviors, especially risky sexual behaviors.⁴⁵ The results indicate that despite the taboos, unmarried adolescents actively seek information about sexual relationships, sexual pleasure, and romance.

The concept of adolescence presents challenges related to sexual issues, especially for girls who are more vulnerable. To enable adolescent girls to make informed decisions and improve their sexual health, they require the support and guidance of adults. However, inadequate and inappropriate guidance from adults can lead to risky sexual behaviors and even exploitation by sexual predators. This puts girls at risk of various diseases, such as AIDS, as well as other consequences like early pregnancies, dropping out of school, and abortion, which can have physical and

psychological health implications.⁴⁶

Nevertheless, in most cases, adults tend to overlook or encourage avoidance of sexual issues among adolescents. Consequently, they do not provide sufficient and comprehensive information about attitudes and sexual behaviors to adolescent girls.⁴⁷ This occurs while, in many cases, adults expose adolescent girls to negative consequences of sexual relationships, stigmatizing such matters. Even when adolescents approach them with questions, they may react with anger and hostility, which leads to embarrassment and guilt among teenagers.⁴⁷

In our society, discussing sexual matters openly and publicly is not a common practice. Unfortunately, discussing sexual matters informally, often in a humorous context, is widespread. Jokes, humor, and even sexual innuendos among close individuals are common features of Iranian society. This characteristic has led to the intertwining of sexual knowledge in Iran

with incorrect, non-serious, and hypocritical beliefs, creating opportunities for various misconceptions and misuses.⁴⁸ Due to cultural and non-religious reasons, most adolescents, especially girls, lack accurate and appropriate information about physical and psychological changes during puberty. Some may encounter serious physical and psychological problems due to obtaining such information from unconscious and unreliable sources within their family life.⁴⁹

Despite the availability of information and awareness about adolescent girls' sexual issues today, adolescents still face difficulties in decision-making in this regard due to the diversity and complexity of these issues. According to research, these issues are increasing day by day. This means that what was once summarized as simple sexual issues for girls during puberty, such as menstruation, is no longer the case. Alongside the increasing discussion of sexual issues among adolescent girls, unfortunately, we are witnessing a significant increase in sexual problems among them. The primary reason for this issue is the taboo surrounding discussing sexual matters among adolescent girls, which has led to virtual spaces and even inappropriate videos becoming the primary sources of sexual information for adolescents, while the role of parents, teachers, and sexual education among adolescents is severely diminished.

The consequence of these issues is the emergence of numerous sexual problems for adolescent girls, leading to personal and social damage in our country. Girls who seek to satisfy their curiosity through various inappropriate videos during this period are pushed towards early sexual maturity. Due to their lack of awareness and intense emotions during this period, they are inclined towards early sexual experiences, which can result in various mental illnesses such as anxiety, depression, or even suicidal thoughts in adulthood. Alongside mental problems, they may also experience various physical issues, including sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS, or physical damage from abortion.

The most important preventive measure is sex education. The common point in all the researched studies is that creating sexual education programs for girls is the only way to prevent these issues. However, parents and schoolteachers, given their crucial role in imparting sexual information to adolescents, should also invest in increasing their own sexual knowledge. Coordination among these three main pillars can lead

society towards sexual well-being, ultimately enabling adolescent girls to gain sexual self-esteem and minimize sexual harm.

Limitations of the Study

Considering the nature of the study and since the reviewed articles were in Persian, this study has limitations in its nature, such as the lack of correct reporting of statistics and information, as well as the presence of considerations in publishing articles in this field.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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