Adolescence is a Latin word, which means “a process of growing up.” Many psychologists and sociologists consider it as a very important phase of life, as all the major sexual orientations take place during this time of an individual. In addition, perception building and morality are put in the form of bricks to the new base of adulthood that ultimately gives a direction to the physical, social and psychological consequences faced in one’s life. This paper tries to throw some light how sexuality and morality are interweave together to put an adolescent into his/her specific role which is either socially accepted or rejected. Other related factors will also be discussed as they are somehow directly or indirectly shapes the perception regarding one’s own sexuality.

Keywords: Adolescents, sexuality, morality, physical and psychological health

Introduction

Jersield (1963) defines adolescence as “span of years during which boys and girls move from childhood to adulthood mentally, emotionally, socially and physically”. It is certainly a crucial and significant period of life where physiological and psychological changes occur. Approximately adolescence starts from 12 years up to the age of 19 years globally. It can be segregated into two major phases: Early adolescence and late adolescence.

It is a transitional stage where an individual tries to gather a whole lot of information regarding various social, sexual and moral topics from every approachable source. Hence it also contributes a lot towards the development of one’s own self. Also during adolescence the insight starts improving which certainly leads to a better understanding of consequences related to specific events. Many studies in this field also discuss what are the major factors linked to positive and negative behaviours during this transitional phase. Donovan and Jessor (1985) identified a single cause of negative behavior among adolescents. The main finding of this study highlighted that there is a strong relationship between risky behavior and negative behavior displayed by adolescents.

Also in this developing period morality comes into use. It contributes largely to the overall development of personality. In fact family and peers are the key ingredients for the shaping up the morality among early adolescents. A broken family and bad peer relations can push the individual to the wrong tracks of emotional maladjustment. Another astonishing feature of this age is the development of heterosexuality which means attraction towards the opposite sex. The primarily release of hormones like testosterone and estrogen gradually lead the adolescent towards sexual maturation. So at this very phase the role of sex education becomes very necessary as it
will give proper and correct knowledge not only about sex but also biological foundations behind it.

If, the sources behind the knowledge about sex are correct and trustworthy then it will also affect the morality of the young adolescent. Sexuality and morality are interrelated concepts. They tell us what actually an individual is able to return back to the society in a socially desirable way.

**Sexuality Vs Morality**

The connection or link between sexuality and morality somehow or the other stems from our specific culture with which an individual relate himself/herself. Every adult in his/her early period of life is conditioned that his/her reputation is a reflection of his/her character. And subsequently the character displayed regulates the emotions which we perceive. But since the cultures are different and vary across the globe, so does the meaning of sexuality and morality. But on the other hand it is true that sexuality and morality cannot be virtually separated with each other.

During infancy there is hardly any recognition of one’s gender but as the child grows, the sense of gender identity starts developing. Researches in the western world suggest that androgens have a role to play in gender specific behaviors(Wilson,1999). Mostly it is seen that sexual interest is at its peak during middle and late adolescence (17years). In talking with the respect to the Indian culture the moral values are somewhat dominating over the issues which are more necessary to be discussed. Here the morality says that talking about sex with the opposite gender and also with your own parents is still considered as a taboo in many places and different communities of our nation. This affects the perception of sexuality and sometimes it can lead to other diverse ways of satisfying their curiosity which is not socially acceptable in any of the cultures.

Also the biological, psychological and social factors are key in determining the sexuality among adolescents. Sometimes the sexuality or sexual behavior is determined by genes and hormones, which in turn may change other primary and secondary sexual characteristics. The best example of this can be Gender Identity Disorder. In a ways these factors are very much responsible for getting attracted or being attracted towards someone else. Teenagers make moral judgements in their day to day life which are building upon different perceptual processes. The environment in which he/she lives creates a big impact upon the thinking process of the person. Morality is also developed by the peer attachment and peer influence. If the peer group is not a desirable social group, then there are higher chances that the individual will also be like that group sharing same moral values which may not be ethically right and idealistic. Few researches also suggests that during the middle adolescence the rebellious is quite high but gradually at the time of entering into young adulthood, it comes down.

**Factors Responsible for Morality in Adolescence**

Morality comes from the Latin word “moralis” meaning manner or proper behavior. Either in sociology or in psychology, not any single factor can be pinpointed and attributed to the development of morality among adolescents. Different psychologists label different factors for the development of morality. Piaget’s theory of moral development laid the emphasis on simple games that can shape a child’s moral behavior. For example; an adolescent in his childhood must have been told about some specific games and certain rules of playing that game. In that age, he/she simply follow those rules because he lacked that cognitive ability why the rules are formed or framed. But by breaking those rules, his/her true moral development take place.
In adolescence the same child learns to know
that rules are laid down for the benefit of all
players. Kholberg also in the same direction of
Piaget, further explored the moral development
among young and old adolescents. He said that
morality changes with the gradual increase of
age. Older adolescents give more weightage to
the rewards than to the efforts. If it gives lucra-
tive opportunities then the approach and men-
tality towards the specific task would be entirely
different. While in young adolescents, the pat-
tern which is seen is to avail the consequences.
It clarifies that when the fear of facing the con-
sequences, especially negative consequences,
there is decadence on moral values.

Carl Gilligan, a female therapist talked about
moral development in girls which lead to the
conclusion that justice and care given to oneself
result in strong moral virtues. They will develop
the same traits like that of their care givers and
the likelihood to turn away somebody in need
was less. Other factors like parents and peers
also influence the moral development in adoles-
cents. Young children like to imitate what they
see from their parents and guardians, so it is
often said that “parents are our first teachers”. They try to inculcate the same moral values
which they themselves follow. Also researches
gives evidences that higher level of reasoning
is related to parenting which is supportive in na-
ture, like that of authoritative parenting style
(Eisenberg et al., 2009). Also gender and sex of
the individual is a factor that affects the role in
moral development in the children as well as
adolescents. In few researches the girls are
shown to be more prone with shame or guilt if
their behavior does not find concordance with
the societal display of rules. On the other hands
boys are more critical and evaluative as com-
pared to girls.

Developing Morality and Sexuality simulta-
nously
It must be noted that there cannot be a single
line drawn between sexuality and morality and
how they are inculcated in the life of an indi-
vidual. Both the concepts develops simulta-
neously and leaving little scope for the research-
ers to ponder upon their varying sideline out-
comes. But for sure, they are interwoven to-
gether. In some cases the sexuality of the indi-
vidual dominates in his/her nature while in other
it is the morality which is reflected more effi-
ciently in his/her nature. But since both the con-
cepts are shaped up by many factors, they both
are present in every single human being. Moral-
ity and sexuality discriminates a man from the
rest of the animal kingdom species.

The cognitions help a person to think and iden-
tify what needs to be done in order to wisely
utilize these concepts. In some western nations
the premarital sex is quite common. It is their
moral thinking which signifies that there is no
harm in having physical relations with the part-
tners before marriage. On this basis we cannot
judge and say that they are having wrong ethi-
cal values since our culture doesn’t permit pre-
marital sex. Here it is still considered as a sin.
Hence this will affect the sexual thinking which
is different in different cultures and subsequently
our sexual wishes and desires are character-
ized.

Both the concepts are just like two sides of
the coin. In a way it can be said morality and
sexuality are indispensable from each other.
Sexual orientation and moral values together
shapes up the true character of a man.

Conclusion
There must not be any doubt in mind that
morality and sexuality are two crucial develop-
mental processes for a human being. It is a ten-
dency of all adolescents to make mistakes and
then learn from those mistakes. It is by the learn-
ing process that he/she will gradually get to the
mark of standards which are acceptable by our
society. The duty of the care givers, parents and
guardians is to talk to them during this phase of
development and guide them to the right path by understanding them in every possible way. Moral development or sexual development is not a one day process, rather it takes years and yet these processes overlap with each other and making them influence over the whole personality. During adolescence, an individual is full of enthusiasm due to biological functioning of the body and this develops somewhere a tendency to learn new tasks which are challenging in nature. So proper channelization should be maintained as it affects the mindset of an individual even during his youth.

Sex is the third basic need of humans according to Abraham Maslow, and every living organism does it for survival. The role of sexual ethics hence plays a vital role in adolescence as the primary and secondary sexual characteristics are developed in this age. Condemning the unethical sexual practices is a good way to tackle misleading information regarding sex. Also the destructive and impulsivity of emotions should be taken care of so that moral reasoning can get a chance to replace the misconceptions which are already developed.

References:


