



PUBERTY AND PERFORMANCE OF ADOLESCENTS IN SCHOOL

Seema Sharma, Gargi Chhabra
supervisory incharge
DL DAV Model school

Puberty typically begins at about ten to twelve years of age and involves physiological, social, neurological and emotional changes. This makes it one of the most significant stages in human development. Also, a stage that influences the educational outcomes of children and adolescents.

The commencement of puberty can mark a decline in academic motivation that can reduce school achievement. For this more work needs to be done to ensure that schools and parents are accounting for the effects of development on the performance of students.

THE EFFECTS OF PUBERTY

The hormonal surges related to puberty are thought to affect children and adolescents in several ways. Emotional responses are sensitive and these may fluctuate. This makes their responses towards adults and peers more unpredictable and in turn, affects how they feel and behave at school.

Maturation can make adolescents engage in activities and roles for which they do not yet have the appropriate reasoning skills. Young people start considering themselves as “all grown up” and thus reject adult authority, including teachers. This may also impact academic development.

Despite the cataclysm, there are some promising benefits. It is thought that the teen’s brain may be sensitised by hormones that make them more receptive to recompenses and positive feedback from teachers. This influences their motivation and behaviour.

CASE STUDY

We worked on a study of 382 young people aged 10-14 to specifically examine the effect of puberty on their academic achievement and motivation.

In order to examine motivation, we looked at academic self-efficacy and opinions about school. Whether they think school is valuable, pertinent, and eloquently connected to life. Our measure of academic achievement was students’ performance in mathematics, English, and science. In order to establish the extent of pubertal development, our research team tested participants’ levels of testosterone and oestradiol (a form of oestrogen) and rate their level of development using the “Tanner staging system”. (Tanner Staging, also known as Sexual Maturity Rating (SMR), is an objective classification system that one uses to study and record the development and sequence of secondary sex characteristics of children during puberty).

THE FINDINGS

The study confirmed that puberty lower self-confidence in students and subsequently lowers the value they placed on school. This, in turn, lowers their academic achievement.

Fascinatingly, pubertal status was not directly associated with academic achievement Rather, it lowers academic motivation among students. The effects are similar for boys and girls but as girls (generally) experience puberty earlier, their academic motivation drops earlier than boys

The findings are important because they show that steps need to be taken. This is complicated because teenagers' brains are directed more towards 'social learning' than books as they try to experience the real world. When peer groups take centre stage in their life, many adolescents become aggressive and confrontational. Good students may stop caring about grades and be reluctant to do homework or shows disrespectful behaviour towards parents and teachers. Although adolescents may look like young adults, they are still children in many ways. This leads to problems when they're expected to behave in a mature manner that doesn't match their mental growth. According to Dr Sarah-Jayne Blakemore who led a study on brain development, chaotic thought patterns persist in adolescents because they have excess grey matter. This hinders neural transmissions and negatively affects adolescents' decision-making abilities.

TIPS TO HANDLE ADOLESCENTS

Teachers play a substantial role in the lives of adolescents. This is the time when a teacher can do a lot of help to adolescents to develop a stable and sensible personality. Teachers have to guide and inspire the students and act as partners in the teaching-learning process providing purposeful activities. This is the duty of the teachers to integrate a set of values and develop a logical manner to help teenage students.

It is the responsibility of the teacher to provide a suitable environment in schools. Their eating habits should be checked. They must be given knowledge of health, personal hygiene, about various diseases and their prevention to keep them fit.

All the changes in physical maturity bring a new interest in sexuality. At this time, they can attract the opposite sex. Teachers should also provide adequate information on sex hygiene and physiology. The forceful inhibition and restrictions imposed in this direction bring undesirable results.

A cheerful teacher is a source of inspiration to his students. Teachers should be kind, compassionate and patient. A teacher should develop a friendly relationship with the students to understand the influences that change their behaviour.

Career counselling helps students to select their careers according to their choices and interests. Teachers should provide sound guidance to them because due to lack of counselling, many students lose direction and engage in bad practices such as drug abuse and alcohol indulgence, missing classes, dropouts and so on; as a result, they lack both focus and direction which results into total failure in life. Therefore, it becomes a prime duty of the teacher to guide the students about their career options and channel their energy in the proper direction.

Motivation is one of the strongest tools that come from a teacher. They motivate their students to learn in a fun and engaging manner. The role of a teacher in today's era has become very challenging, complex and multi-layered. They generally teach before a live audience, and they also clear the doubts of the students.

Teachers are real supporters. Overall, they play a key role in everyone's life and provide brightness to their students' future by giving them valuable knowledge. The teachers play the role of guardian, friend and mentor along with their primary duty

Parents and teachers need to keep in mind that adolescents have a lot of potential to do rightful things in life. They should avoid placing unrealistic expectations on them which they may not be prepared to handle.

SEEMA SHARMA
GARGI CHHABRA

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