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Cell : 9595 359 435, Ph No: 02172372010 Email: ayisrj@yahoo.in Website: www.isrj.net**



## NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF INDIAN EXPATRIATE (THIRD CULTURE KIDS) ADOLESCENT GIRLS LIVING IN KUWAIT

RUMIA MA AND THOMAS WILLIAM, A

Ph.D. Scholar, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli, TN, India.  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR & UGC – POST DOCTORAL AWARDEE, Dept. of Applied Research,  
Gandhigram University, Dindigul, TN, India

### Abstract:

*This assessment on the needs of the Indian Expatriate adolescent girls in Kuwait is to develop a culturally appropriate Life Skills Intervention program. Key Informants Interviews and Focus group discussions were the two methods used to assess the need. Situation Analysis was done by Key Informants Interviews. Key Informants Interviews covered; parents, teachers, School counsellors and School administrative staffs. Thirty adolescent girls participated in 3 Focus Group Discussions. The FGDs were recorded and transcribed. In the first stage of Data analysis, similar needs were grouped and ranked according to their order of importance. The Needs that emerged were, Skills to maintain Effective Interpersonal Relationships, Career concerns, health information needs, academic related issues, puberty related issues, personality development and cultural issues. The skill development priority was given to interpersonal relationships.*

### KEY-WORDS:

Situation Analysis, Key Informants Interview, Focus Group Discussions , Needs & Indian Expatriate Adolescent Girl

### INTRODUCTION

Needs assessment is a systematic set of procedures undertaken for the purpose of setting priorities and making decisions about program or organizational improvement and allocation of resources. The priorities are based on identified needs (Witkin and Altschuld, 1995). Adolescent girls' development tends to be somewhat difficult because there are many new issues and demands in their lives which warrant attention and sorting out (Albee, Gullotta, 1997). It may be recalled that these demands include making normal sex adjustments, finding a vocation that will be absorbing, inspiring and satisfying, obtaining a desirable status, preparing for marriage and family life, developing a sense of autonomy and acquiring a realistic and healthy self concept.

These are not easy to achieve since most adolescent girls suffer from identity crisis. Society no longer considers them young enough to be treated as children, nor is it prepared to consider them as adult and entrust them with adult responsibilities. This amorphous position causes anxiety, conflict, frustration and tension and may even lead to feelings of alienation. The girls thus, need help in dealing with these demands and coping with the accompanying emotional reactions to them. This help has to come primarily from the home and school- the two major institutions to which the girls belong.

The next major area of concern is the emotional problems of adolescent girls. The sources of their emotional problems are located in their own sense of self, their homes, their school life and their peers as

well as in the larger society. These problems appear to arise as a consequence of growing up and being unable to give up the past and adjust to a set of new expectations which accompany the present and the future. Also adolescence marks very abruptly the end of childhood which they are unable to accept (Rajan, 2010).

They need to develop and maintain relationships and to work and contribute to their community. It may be said that the present study aims to develop a need based Life Skills Program for adolescent girls on the feedback obtained on their nature of emotional problems and identification of areas based on their experience where they need help and guidance. This program would address itself to the preventive, promotional and curative aspects of mental health and would cater to all adolescent girls in general with the view to helping them become more effective, integrated and well adjusted human beings. This study on Needs Assessment represents a rational way of approaching the identification and analysis of complex needs that emerge among the Indian Expatriate Adolescent Girls who live in rapidly changing societies like Kuwait.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this Needs Assessment, the researcher used two methods namely Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions to collect the data from a diverse sources and population. Situation Analysis was done by conducting Key informant interviews with different stakeholders of adolescents like Teachers, School Counsellors and Parents, to understand the situation of the adolescent girls of Indian origin in Kuwait. It helped the researcher also to refine the theme list for focus group discussions. The interviews were tape recorded with their consent, transcribed and analysed.

Focus Group Discussions were conducted with 30 adolescent girls. Female Students belong to Indian Origin, can speak English and between the age group of 14-16 yrs were included for the study. This study was carried out in the month of December 2010. The researcher relied on homogeneous sampling. Thirty five students who fulfilled these criteria were selected for the study. Of these 35 students, thirty consented to participate in the study. This included students from different socioeconomic background and different states of India. These 30 recruited respondents participated into 3 Focus Group Discussions with members of 12, 9 and 9 respectively in each FGD.

A Focus Group Discussion Guide was developed to have a overall direction for the discussion on the basis of the aims of the study, literature review, constructed theme list and discussion with 2 experienced focus group researchers. The Guide followed a Semi-structured format using open-ended questions. Written Informed consent of the participants were obtained to participate in the study and a Socio-demographic sheet eliciting information on their age, class, religion, known languages domicile in India, and No. of years in Kuwait was completed. The socio-demographic data of the students who participated in the study were compiled in Table-1.

As the group was comprised of adolescents, it was planned to carry out each session for duration of 1 to 1 1/4 hrs and the same was followed. The session started with icebreaker and brainstorming was done for 10 minutes based on a theme list (topics or categories) which was specifically constructed for the study. The main topics covered were; Adolescent Health Information Needs, Puberty and Menstruation, Academics, Career, Relationships, Personality Development and Cultural Differences. The facilitator helped the adolescents to discuss on the research question what are the needs of NRI adolescent girls in Kuwait?. The Researcher facilitated the group process. The discussions were tape recorded and Participant's responses were recorded by using the FGD answer sheets. The FGD data was analysed by using FGD analysis form.

The FGD involved the researcher asking the adolescent to list their needs, group the list of needs into main themes, operationally define the theme and rank them in order of importance (first level of data analysis). As the methodology of free listing of needs was used, all the needs expressed by the adolescents were noted. No needs were deleted as all the participants were adolescents. All the needs were accommodated into either one of the themes. The group went over these themes and ranking several times before finalising them. In each FGD, the most important theme was given the high score (equal to the number of theme listed) and the least important theme was given a score of 1. If two or more themes were deemed as having equal importance during the FGD, then such themes were given similar scores.

Each FGD was transcribed and further data making and analysis was conducted by the researcher (second level of data making). Based on the first level of data making, the researcher reviewed the listing of themes and wherever two or three needs seemed to represent a common theme, they were grouped under an appropriate theme. The scores for each theme across the five FGDs were totalled. The final ranking of the themes corresponded to these totals; the theme with highest total score was ranked as the most important need (Table-2).

RESULTS

SITUATION ANALYSIS

The data gathered from Key Informant Interviews was helped to assess the situation of Indian Adolescents, helped to develop the theme list for the Focus Group Discussion and highlighted the important areas need to be emphasised while planning out an intervention.

**Physical Health Concerns:** The climatic condition (4 months Winter and 4 months Summer) and the technological advancements make the adolescents lazy. They become obese due to lack of exercise and physical activity and the availability of food over here. They love junk food. They are ignorant about the problems that come out of the poor physical activities. Less spacious flats and sharing accommodation nullify their activities.

**Puberty Related Issues:** Most of the Indian girls in Kuwait attain menarche at early ages like 11-12 years. They are not comfortable with their bodily changes, they feel shy, posture gets changed, they are in confusion. Moreover, parents also not open with the girls in terms of puberty and its related issues. They try to seek information from friends, Internet and television and become prey for Mental Health issues.

**Technology, Media and Relationships:** All the houses have everything like TV and Laptops. Dual Earning families, give the adolescents enough freedom to do age inappropriate activities like chatting, surfing and visiting unnecessary sites. Due to work pressure, the parents also encourage the adolescents not to communicate anything with them. All these give them the opportunity to seek a relationship from outside like love affairs. They also become restless in the classes and show risky behaviours which they learnt from Media. They rely on their friends rather than their parents.

**Career Related Issues:** As parents are earning well, they pressurise the children for courses like Medical and Engineering in Lucrative Universities against their children’s interest. The adolescents in Kuwait are left with less options for their higher studies as college education is expensive. Though the parents are well educated they are not aware of the different courses. Parents also do not have trust on their children’s selection of career.

**Academic Related Issues:** CBSE is the only syllabus system available in Kuwait for Indian Students. Children with learning difficulties find it difficult. As Examination pattern is semester system unlike India, they would remember the portions for that particular semester only. They never tried to update their knowledge by reading newspaper, listen to News channels etc. They are less competitive. They rely on Private tuitions for scoring marks.

**Personal Skills:** They are poor in time management, personal care and hygiene. They do not take proper meals at home and they tend to eat during the class hours. They go to bed late in the night due to TV and Internet. School and Home are the two worlds for these adolescent girls and thus their socialization is less. They lack life skills as they undergo stereotypical situations daily. Many of them have maids at home, so they do not show any interest to household activities. They lack responsibilities. They are fun and frolic.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The main needs that emerged from the analysis of the FGDs are described in Table-2.

I. Maintaining Effective Interpersonal Relationship

They want to develop trusting relationship especially with their parents even if their(adolescents) views are different from that of the parents; want to develop assertive skills when necessary especially when there is unwanted peer pressure; and skills to recognize their own anger and ways to cope with it as it interferes with relationships.

If we tell them (parents) the truth also, they will not trust us, instead they will blame us only. so we do not feel like telling anything (FGD-2).

I think of sharing but they (parents) would misunderstand me. So i avoid (FGD-3).

“I know that they do not want to make the small one to get upset or depressed.... but I feel there is partiality because my mother takes with the elder one, she does not share her problem with me. If they want some advice or suggestions they would ask from elder daughter” (FGD1).



II. Career Concerns

To understand the relation between Career and Education; difference between work, job and career; stages in career development; factors to be considered in career planning; understanding one’s own interest, aptitude, values, personality, goals and priorities; options available after X<sup>th</sup> and XII<sup>th</sup>; understand the concerns of parents and communicating their wish assertively with them. We are really scared..... Parents want to fulfil their dreams through us (FGD-1).

Table – 1  
Socio-demographic Data of NRI Adolescents Girls (n=30)

Variable	n (%)	Variable	n (%)	Variable	n (%)
Age of the Girls		No.Of years in Kuwait		Domicile in India	
14	15 (50)	0-5 yrs	5(17)	Urban	7(23)
15	14 (47)	5-10 yrs	5(17)	Semi-urban	14(47)
16	1(3)	> 10yrs	20(67)	Rural	9(30)
Mother Tongue		No. of Languages Known		Religion	
Malayalam	11(37)	Two	10(33)	Hinduism	4(13)
Bangla	4(13)	Three	12(40)	Christianity	6(20)
Hin di	4(13)	Four	6(20)	Islam	20(67)
Gujarathi	2(7)	Five	0(0)		
Urdu	5(17)	Six	2(7)		
Marathi	1(3)				
Konkani	3(10)				

Table-2  
Ranking, rating and percentage of importance of Themes across 3 FGDs

Order	Theme	FGD-1	FGD-2	FGD-3	Total	%*
	Maintaining Interpersonal Relationship	6	7	7	20	23.2
	Career Concerns	7	6	5	18	20.9
	Health Information Needs	4	4	7	15	17.4
	Academic related issues	5	5	4	14	16.2
	Puberty Related Issues	3	4	3	10	11.6
	Personality Development	2	2	2	6	6.9
	Cultural Issues	1	1	1	3	3.4

\*Percentage of total needs score represented by the themes. Total Needs score = (20+18+15+14+10+6+3)=86

III. Adolescents Perceived Health Information Needs

They have the following perceived health Information Needs: Nutrition, Eating Habits, Healthy and unhealthy food, myths and facts about food; importance of Physical activity and exercise in maintaining good bodyline and healthy lifestyles; and the ill effects of inappropriate usage of beauty products.

We lack nutritious food. We prefer junk food. Our diet habits are not good. We do not take breakfast at all. We need to have knowledge on what to eat and what not to eat (FGD-3).

IV. Academic Related Issues

Techniques to improve motivation towards studies, concentration, memory; skills to understand



the factors like time management; regular study habits; ability to handle the stress of planning, preparing and facing the examination; appropriate preparation for the specific examinations; and following good examination skills.

Earlier we had board exams only for X<sup>th</sup> and XII<sup>th</sup> std. It was better. Now we have stress from IX<sup>th</sup> onwards. We want to learn how to manage our time. According to new syllabus, there are lots of projects and assignments. There are lots of notes to be completed. We spend most of our time in writing and writing. We postpone all assignment and projects. At the last moment everything comes together, we are trapped. We need to learn which one need to be given priority (FGD-3).

#### **V. Puberty Related Issues**

Information to make the adolescents understand the types of physical, mental and social changes during adolescence; myths and misconceptions of puberty; Menstruation; suggestions to get rid of pain and cramps during menstruation; skills towards better care of self during menstruation; and develop a sense of pride on issues, which are considered exclusively feminine.

We feel irritable and a discomfort feeling why it is happening to girls only (FGD-1).

At the same time, even it gets late for 1 or 2 days we become tensed. It means we have some problems (FGD-2).

#### **VI. Personality Development**

They need Skills in Time management, assertiveness, self confidence and communication.

I need to be self confident ...(FGD-1)

#### **VII. Cultural Issues**

They do not have any issues with reference to cultural differences in the School or in their neighbourhood.

They welcome it for the reason they are able to understand and accommodate well with others.

We learn different languages, celebrate many festivals.....(FGD-3)

### **DISCUSSION**

The quality of a rapid assessment depends on appropriate selection of sample populations. Sampling should not be random, but purposive. Non-Adolescent “key informants” can provide detailed information and special expertise (WHO, 2001). Certain methodological issues of this study need to be mentioned. Qualitative studies are especially helpful when one intends to generate impressions and to develop assessment scales, programmes or services (Stewart et al, 2007). Skill development is a key to facilitate the process of transforming information into healthy behaviours (Sharma, 2003& Magnani et al, 2005).

As the main purpose of the study is to develop a culturally appropriate Life Skills Program for the adolescent girls, the methodologies used in this study are highly reliable. In this study, the qualitative assessment methods involved both Key Informants Interview and Focus Group Discussions and the data was collected from diverse sources and Population to strengthen the validity of the findings (triangulation). The participants for the Focus Group Discussions were identified by the concerned class teachers mentioning the ability to express one's thoughts in a group to enhance the group discussion and friends were avoided to rule out bias.

Botvin et al, 1994, suggested that the broad spectrum life skills and culturally focused approaches have utility for inner-city, minority youths. The main area of concern emerged for the adolescents was, skill to maintain interpersonal relationships. This result is similar to a study conducted by Rajan, 2010 in India where he assessed the mental health needs of the adolescents girls. 250 girls were randomly selected from 5 different schools and focus group discussions were carried out. Problems in interpersonal relationships with parents and teachers, feelings of self doubt and inadequacy and dissatisfactions with friendship pattern have emerged as the main areas where help and intervention is needed. The findings from the Key Informants interview were congruent with that of the results of the Focus Group Discussions.

### **CONCLUSION**

The purpose of the study was to assess the needs of the Indian Expatriate adolescent girls. They have to mingle with students of different culture. Multiculturalism leads to generation gap between parents and adolescents, so the participants felt that the skill to maintain interpersonal relationships may empower them a lot and they can have better interaction with their parents, teachers and others. They do not find any difficulties with people of different cultural background. They all have positive attitude towards

Multiculturalism. Further data analysis will be carried out using thematic network for Interpersonal Relationships.

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## APPENDIX-1

Needs expressed by adolescent girls in one of the FGDs

- 1.Information on Nutritious food
- 2.Ill effect of junk food
- 3.Healthy diet habits
- 4.Physical activity and exercise
- 5.Games which enhance brain activity
- 6.Bad effects of beauty products
- 7.Health hazards due to pointed heels
- 8.Care during menstruation with regard to food and mood shifts
- 9.Tackle the tension due to irregular menstruation
- 10.Accepting menstruation as part of womanhood
- 11.Skills to prioritize and manage academic tasks
- 12.Skill to manage exams and related fear
- 13.Skills to manage the time and stress
- 14.Skills to understand one's own ability in subjects
- 15.Need clear information on career
- 16.Skills to know our inner qualities
- 17.Skills to convince the parents in choosing a career of their own choice
- 18.Skill to choose a career where she can enjoy the whole life
- 19.Skills to disclose ourselves to our parents with reference to low mark, failure etc
- 20.Skills to enhance the trust of parents on us
- 21.Skills to accept elder's suggestion
- 22.Skill to socialize with the outside world
- 23.Skill to think optimistically
- 24.Learn to have limitation for each and every activity



**RUMIA MA**

Ph.D. Scholar, Manonmanium Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli, TN, India



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