Challenging Gender Stereotypes and Gender-based Violence in Schools

Evidence from the Adolescence Education Programme, India

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Abstract

The Adolescence Education Programme (AEP) implemented by the Government of India and United Nations Population Fund aims to empower school-going adolescents with scientifically accurate, culturally sensitive information on issues related to their health and well-being. This paper examines the attitudes of students on gender stereotypes and gender-based violence (GBV) and the role of individual, parental level factors and AEP in shaping these attitudes. Responses from 7,662 students aged 14–18 years from the evaluation of AEP (2010–11) are analysed. Results from multivariate analyses suggest that in comparison to boys, girls have more progressive attitudes in challenging gender stereotypes (coefficient: 1.35, p-value<0.01) and GBV (coefficient: 1.21, p-value<0.01). Internet access and mothers' education are associated with progressive attitudes. Students from socially disadvantaged groups reported less progressive attitudes. Students exposed to AEP reported significantly more positive attitudes. Programme effectiveness could be increased by giving specific attention to boys, disadvantaged social groups and more engagement with parents.

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Introduction

Gender stereotypes begin early as young children learn socially desirable behaviours during daily interactions within family and society (Thomson, 2002). Stereotypes reflect the value and roles that society ascribes to girls in comparison to boys, and affect access to education, health, employment and income (Krishnan, Dunbar, Minnis, Medlin, Gerdts, and Padian, 2008; Sen, George, and Ostlin, 2002). Gender double standards and power imbalances often undermine young people's ability to make informed and responsible sexual and reproductive health choices. Behaviour conforming to gender expectations may pose a barrier to open and honest communication on sexual behaviours, yet to be rewarded by enhanced social status (Marston and King, 2006). Rigid and discriminatory norms create circumstances for gender-based violence (GBV) of various kinds (Heise, Ellsberg, and Gottmoeller, 2002) including, verbal, non-verbal, psychological and physical, in homes, workplaces and public spaces (Srinivasan, 2011). Violence against women within relationships is often construed as normal, or as the victim's fault (Marston and King, 2006).

There is sufficient evidence to underscore the prevalence of gender-based discrimination and violence in the Indian society. The Youth Study (International Institute for Population Sciences [IIPS] and Population Council, 2010) conducted across six Indian states reported 5 per cent young women (aged 15–24) being allowed to visit nearby village or neighbourhood for entertainment in comparison to 58 per cent young men. Among those with a bank account, 54 per cent young women compared to 90 per cent young men controlled its operation, suggesting substantial gender differentials in mobility and financial independence. In the patriarchal Indian family, power vests in elder males; sons are preferred to daughters and provided better schooling, health care and opportunities for advancement.

Gender norms systematically place girls at a disadvantage, yet pose barriers for boys too. The double standards for sexual behaviour, whereby, restraint is expected of girls and excesses tolerated for boys, compounds reproductive health problems for both sexes (Bearinger, Sieving, Ferguson, and Sharma, 2007; Jaya and Hindin, 2007). A study by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India (2007) in 13 states of India indicated pervasiveness of abuse among children and young people; 53 per cent in the age group 5–18 years reported having faced some form of sexual abuse. The victims included 54 per cent boys and 46 per cent girls.

A young person's individual attributes and a supportive environment, particularly family, school and peer network are important for developing attitudes

and abilities to challenge dominant gender norms (Alexander, Garda, Kanade, Jejeebhoy, and Ganatra, 2007). Young people, in general, lack a safe and supportive family environment, nor do parents serve as reliable sources of information. This poses major obstacles to their achievement of good sexual and reproductive health and realisation of their rights.

There is increasing evidence that rights-based, gender sensitive, life skills focused sexuality education programmes can play an important role in reducing adolescent sexual risk behaviours and promoting health and well-being (Rohrbach, Berglas, Jerman, Angulo-Olaiz, Chou, and Constantine, 2015; Laski *et al.*, 2015). Such programmes may reach large number of adolescents in areas with high school enrolment rates (Rohrbach *et al.*, 2015, Bearinger *et al.*, 2007). The education system is a major influence on young people. Schools help students acquire knowledge, imbibe values and develop an understanding of social and gender norms (Dunne and Leach, 2005). School education can play a key role in reinforcing or challenging gender stereotypes and associated violence (Thomson, 2002). School-based interventions are feasible and cost effective as school-going adolescents comprise a relatively homogenous and accessible audience. Being recognised as institutions of learning, implementing sexuality education programmes in schools is likely to improve their acceptability. Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) programmes can be a major intervention for the promotion of equality and rights and establish a basis for young people, including the most vulnerable, to protect their sexual, reproductive and mental health and well-being (Kaidbey, 2015). Although school-based interventions have been shown to have an impact on reducing GBV, much remains to be done by the education sector (Contreras-Urbina, 2015).

Sexuality Education in India

A qualitative study with parents of youth aged 15–24 years in six states of India revealed that they did not discuss sexuality-related matters with young people. They perceived such discussion to be against cultural norms and expressed concern that communicating about sexual matters would lead young people to engage in sexual activity (Jejeebhoy and Santhya, 2011; Santhya and Jejeebhoy, 2012). Another study indicated fewer than 10 per cent young men and women had discussed growing up, pregnancy and reproduction-related matters with either of their parents; 77 per cent young women had discussed "growing up" — generally limited to the mechanics of handling menstruation and behavioural dos and don'ts — with their mothers (IIPS and Population Council, 2010). In a study with school-going adolescent girls in Delhi, 48 per cent said it

was not possible to talk with parents about sex and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) (McManus and Dhar, 2008). Another study, with parents of adolescent girls, found a majority of parents in urban areas in favour of sex education, while those in rural areas disapproved of sex education for their daughters (Mahajan and Sharma, 2005).

However, young people clearly express the need for sexuality or family life education. The Youth Study (IIPS and Population Council, 2010) showed 82 per cent young men and 78 per cent young women (aged 15–24) stating this education was important. Smaller, school-based samples show similar results (Unni, 2010; Thakor and Kumar, 2000). Most young people consider school teachers as an important source of information on issues related to reproductive health and well-being (IIPS and Population Council, 2010; Thakor and Kumar, 2000; Bhasin and Agarwal, 1999). Yet, despite high demand from students, only 15 per cent young women and men reported having ever received family life or sex education in school or other programmes (IIPS and Population Council, 2010).

India introduced some elements of sexuality education in secondary schools in 1980, via the National Population Education Programme (NPEP), supported by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). In mid-1990s, the framework broadened, from the early preoccupation with demographic issues, to include adolescent sexual and reproductive health, gender equity and HIV-AIDS education. In 2005, government initiatives on Adolescence Education were harmonised by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) under the umbrella term, "Adolescence Education Programme" (AEP). In 2007, the programmes faced a backlash when several state governments withdrew it on the grounds that the curriculum, particularly some illustrations in it, was culturally inappropriate (Gentleman, 2007). Thereafter, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) led revisions in the curriculum. Currently, several different AEPs are being implemented; the AEP examined in the present paper (and referred to as AEP through the rest of the paper) is the one being implemented at the national level. In 2009, AEP was restructured by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) under the aegis of MHRD, with technical and financial support from UNFPA, through an elaborate consultative process with relevant stakeholders including government, civil society, experts, students, teachers and principals. The AEP curriculum has been revised to make it increasingly relevant and responsive to adolescent needs. The content now includes themes

of understanding changes during adolescence, positive and responsible relationships, challenging stereotypes and discrimination related to gender and sexuality, reporting abuse and violation, prevention of substance misuse and HIV/AIDS. AEP is positioned as an educational approach to develop life skills and empower young people with scientifically accurate and culturally sensitive information.

The programme has worked through the following school systems:

- Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS), a system of central government schools under MHRD.
- Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS), a system of residential, co-educational schools under MHRD for rural, economically disadvantaged, meritorious children.
- Private schools affiliated to CBSE.

AEP works through a cascade training approach creating master trainers who orient nodal teachers to transact life skills based education (16 hours module) to secondary school students (aged 14–16) through participatory methodologies. Advocacy sessions are organised with principals and parents to promote an enabling environment. All the secondary schools in KVS (919 schools) and NVS (583 schools) and 2,500 private CBSE schools (out of a total of approximately 10,000 private schools) were covered in AEP by the end of 2009.

The extent to which AEP and other national-level programmes such as Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls have been effective, has not received much attention (Santhya and Jejeebhoy, 2012). There is insufficient evidence on young Indians' attitudes on gender and GBV. The AEP evaluation provides an opportunity to assess adolescent knowledge and attitudes on a range of issues related to sexual and reproductive health and rights. The present paper explores the evidence in terms of attitudes in the realm of gender stereotypes and GBV.

This paper attempts the following:

- Understand the attitudes of school-going adolescent boys and girls on gender stereotypes and GBV.
- Examine the role of individual and socio-economic factors influencing attitudes to gender stereotypes and GBV.
- Assess the role of AEP in improving attitudes relevant to these issues.

Methods

AEP Evaluation Design

The AEP evaluation was conducted in 2010–11 across 189 senior secondary schools in five Indian states (Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Karnataka representing northern, central, western, eastern and southern regions respectively). The evaluation design was post test

only, with intervention-comparison school groups. Since all schools in KVS and NVS were covered under the programme, the comparison group was selected from private schools where the programme was not implemented. The three school systems serve students from very diverse socio-economic backgrounds and it is likely that these factors influence attitudes on gender stereotypes and GBV.

Hence, the present paper has been restricted to a sub-sample of 72 private schools that include students from 47 intervention and 25 comparison schools, and analyses responses from 7,662 students enrolled in private schools: 3,055 boys and 2,306 girls who were exposed to AEP programme and 1,399 boys and 902 girls who were not. For details on sampling, please refer to the Concurrent Evaluation of the Adolescence Education Programme (UNFPA and NCERT, 2010–11).

Development of Survey Instruments: Recognising that in the Indian context there were no pre-existing instruments available for such an assessment, a consortium of experts from relevant disciplines was created including educationists, domain experts and practitioners. Assessment tools were finalised after incorporating feedback from this group, and learnings from field testing.

The main research instrument was a self-administered, bilingual (Hindi and English) objective, multiple choice questionnaire to assess students' knowledge, attitudes and skills in applying learning in simulated real life situations. Seventy objective type questions were developed around themes covered under AEP. A similar, smaller, questionnaire was prepared for teachers, and a qualitative research tool for students. In the present paper, we analyse findings only from the students' questionnaire.

Questions on gender stereotypes and GBV: In this paper, attitudes on gender stereotypes and GBV are explored through specific questions, based on case vignettes and perceptions on commonly held beliefs and norms. Each question had four or five options to find out whether the respondents held strongly positive, strongly negative or ambivalent attitudes with regard to these issues. The case vignettes were contextualised to resonate with age and social realities of school-going adolescents.

The three vignettes on challenging gender stereotypes explore the situations of an adolescent boy who enjoys doing household work (contrary to normative masculinity); an adolescent girl good in sports but embarrassed to pursue it (social norms discourage girls to display the body post-puberty); and twin boy-girl siblings who want to pursue art, which their parents countenance for the daughter but not for the son. Each vignette deals with a gender stereotype widely prevalent in society. Apart from these, a number of statements related to gender roles were given and respondents were asked whether each statement was based on biological facts or mindsets.

The three vignettes dealing with GBV explore situations of sexual harassment of girls in public (a cinema hall); in school (by a male teacher in the sports class); and child sexual abuse (a boy abused by a relative, at home). The fourth question explores attitudes towards intimate partner violence, specifically wife-beating.

Selection of Students: One section per class (Classes IX through XII) was selected by the quality assurance team. All students present in the selected section on the day the survey was fielded, were invited to participate.

Ethical Considerations: The permission to field the assessment was obtained from each school system and principals of the selected schools were informed by the school systems. The survey team was informed that principals had the authority to allow assessment of ongoing programmes without parental consent. The consent form was included with the questionnaire and the survey team ensured that every participant read it and provided written consent. Respondents were assured anonymity and were free to refuse participation in the survey.

Quality Assurance: The survey team helped students understand the instructions and/or questions. To ensure accurate, complete and consistent data, validity and range checks were carried out. Overall, the percentage of ineligible entries was less than 1 per cent in all questions. Multiple entries in single response questions were less than 0.1 per cent. Both these suggest good data quality. Even on sensitive questions related to GBV, the response rate is close to 100 per cent, suggesting that the findings accurately represent the viewpoints of students who participated in the study.

Statistical Analysis

We have used STATA-11 for the analyses.

We computed the Index of Dissimilarity (Duncan, 1957) for the selected background characteristics to determine whether intervention and comparison schools were comparable.

Two separate indices on challenging gender stereotypes and GBV were constructed from students' responses (see Appendix). We assigned scores of +1 to each of the progressive response options and -1 to each of the regressive response options. The indices were created by taking all responses from the questions on gender roles and GBV, respectively, and summing up the scores assigned to all response options under the two domains. The index on challenging gender stereotypes was based on 12 negative and 12 positive responses and the one on challenging GBV was based on seven negative and eleven positive responses. The overall scores for each of the two indices were further divided into three equal categories defined as low, moderate and high.

Cronbach's alpha was applied to check the reliability of both indices and was found to be 0.70 and 0.51, for the indices on challenging gender stereotypes and GBV, respectively.

Multivariate ordinary least square (OLS) regression analyses were used to better understand the role of select socio-demographic factors and the role of AEP on the outcome

indices among all students, and then separately for boys and girls.

The indices on challenging gender stereotypes and GBV were considered the dependent variables. Age, sex, religion, caste, access to internet, mother's education, father's profession and type of school (intervention and comparison) were considered as independent variables. All the variables were categorical except "age" which was used as a continuous variable. The sample was assigned to three religious categories Hindu, Sikh and Others (including Muslims, Christians, nature worshippers and those who reported no religion), and four caste groups Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Castes (OBCs) and Others (including all privileged caste groups). Scheduled Castes are considered to have been exploited for over centuries, at the bottom of the Indian caste system. Scheduled Tribes are the indigenous groups of India and among the deprived sections. Students' access to internet was explored at home, in school or in a cyber cafe. Mother's education was defined through four categories:

1. Non-literate or less than five years of education
2. 5–8 years of education
3. 10–12 years of education
4. College or professional degree/ diploma.

Father's occupation was divided into four categories, including:

1. Service or salaried
2. Having own business
3. Engaged in agriculture
4. Wage labourers or unemployed.

This set of independent variables covers a substantial range of individual as well as socio-economic factors that interface with and influence attitudes on gender stereotypes and GBV. Age is an important variable as students are likely to have varying exposure and experiences as they grow up. Due to differential sets of gendered socialisation patterns for girls and boys, sex of respondent is another crucial variable. Religion and caste are signifiers of students' socio-cultural contexts, and mother's education level and father's occupation, access to internet and type of school are proxies for students' socio-economic location.

Findings

Profile of student respondents: The mean age of students in the sample was 15.4 years; they were in the age group 12–18 years. There were more boys (58 per cent) than girls. Seventy-six per cent students were Hindu by religion and 15 per cent were Sikh. Majority of students belonged to "other" castes (76 per cent); only 6 per cent to SCs, 3 per cent to STs and 14 per cent to OBCs. Eighty-three per cent students had access to internet. Majority of fathers of students were in salaried jobs (57 per cent), while 28 per cent had their own enterprise/ business. Mothers of nearly 50 per cent students had a college degree or diploma. Seventy per cent students were from intervention schools and 30 per cent from comparison schools. Please refer to Panel 1 of Table 1.

Table 1
Background Characteristics of Students

Background Characteristics	All students		Boys		Girls	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Age, mean (SD)	15.4 (0.01)	7,662	15.5 (0.02)	4,454	15.3 (0.02)	3,208
Sex						
Boys	58.1	4,454	--	--	--	--
Girls	41.9	3,208	--	--	--	--
Religion						
Hindu	76.2	5,842	76.5	3,406	75.9	2,436
Sikh	14.5	1,109	14.1	626	15.1	483
Others	9.3	711	9.5	422	9	289
Caste						
General	76.3	5,849	75	3,341	78.2	2,508
SCs	6.0	456	5.7	253	6.3	203
STs	3.4	260	3.3	149	3.5	111
OBCs	14.3	1,097	16	711	12	386
Access to internet						
No	17.1	1,310	13	580	22.8	730
Yes	82.9	6,352	87	3,874	77.2	2,478
Father's profession						
Service	57.2	4,380	54.7	2,438	57.2	4,380
Business	28.0	2,144	28.3	1,262	28.0	2,144
Agriculture	10.2	783	12.0	533	10.2	783
Wage Labour/Not employed	4.7	355	4.9	221	4.2	134
Mother's education						
Non-literate	4.9	378	6.2	278	3.1	100
Middle education completed	10.4	798	12.3	550	7.7	248
Secondary education completed	36.0	2,757	37.0	1,647	34.6	1,110
Higher education completed	48.7	3,729	44.4	1,979	54.6	1,750
Type of school						
Comparison	30.0	2,301	31.4	1,399	28.1	902
Intervention	70.0	5,361	68.6	3,055	71.9	2,306
Total	**100**	**7,662**	**100**	**4,454**	**100**	**3,208**

Eighty-seven per cent boys and 77 per cent girls had access to internet. The mothers of 55 per cent girls in comparison to 44 per cent boys had a college degree or diploma. Please refer to Panels 2 and 3 of Table 1.

Table 2
Comparison of Students in Intervention and Comparison Schools by Background Characteristics

Background Characteristics	Comparison	Intervention	Index of Dissimilarity (in %)
Age	***		
Mean (years)	15.3	15.5	
Sex	**		3.8
Boys	60.8	57.0	
Girls	39.2	43.0	
Religion	***		6.1
Hindu	72	78.1	
Sikh	17.7	13.1	
Others	10.3	8.8	
Caste	***		3.0
Other	75	76.9	
SCs	6.6	5.7	
STs	2.6	3.7	
OBCs	15.8	13.7	
Access to internet	**		2.7
No	19	16.3	
Yes	81	83.7	
Father's profession	***		7.2
Service	52.1	59.3	
Business	29	27.6	
Agriculture	14	8.6	
Wage Labour	0.9	0.9	
Not employed	4	3.7	
Mother's education	***		7.9
Non-literate	5.9	4.5	
Middle education completed	12.3	9.6	

Secondary education completed	38.7	34.8	
Higher education completed	43.2	51	
Total	**100**	**100**	

Note: *t-test for age and Chi square test for other variables to test differences in background characteristics between AEP and control school; significance level: ***p<0.01, ** p<0.05*

Table 2 shows the comparative distributions of background characteristics across intervention and comparison schools. The index of dissimilarity (refer to Panel 3 in Table 2) is not large for any background characteristic thus validating the comparison between intervention and comparison schools.

Table 3
Indices on Challenging Gender Stereotype and Gender-based Violence by Sex and Type of Schools

	Challenging Gender Stereotypes			**Challenging Gender-based Violence**		
	Comparison Schools	Intervention Schools	All	Comparison Schools	Intervention Schools	All
All students						
Mean	5.3	5.8	5.7	3.7	4.1	4.0
Less progressive	1.3	0.8	0.9	2.4	1.7	1.9
Moderate	34.4	30.4	31.6	72.9	66.8	68.7
More progressive	64.4	68.8	67.5	24.6	31.5	29.4
Significance	***			***		
Boys						
Mean	4.7	5.2	5.1	3.3	3.6	3.5
Less progressive	1.7	1.2	1.4	3.4	2.5	2.8
Moderate	39.7	35.7	36.9	77.5	73.0	74.4
More progressive	58.6	63.1	61.7	19.1	24.5	22.8
Significance	***			***		

Girls						
Mean	6.2	6.6	6.4	4.4	4.9	4.7
Less progressive	0.6	0.3	0.4	0.9	0.6	0.7
Moderate	26.2	23.4	24.2	65.8	58.6	60.6
More progressive	73.3	76.3	75.5	33.3	40.8	38.7
Significance				***		

Note: *Chi square test for differences in attitudes between intervention and comparison school; significance level: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05*

Table 3 summarises the indices on challenging gender stereotypes and GBV by sex and type of schools. The observed mean value of challenging gender stereotypes index was 5.7 (ranging from -9 to 12) and that of challenging GBV index was 4.0 (ranging from -7 to 11). Three-quarters of girls in comparison to 62 per cent boys reported more progressive attitudes on challenging gender stereotypes whereas 39 per cent girls in comparison to 23 per cent boys reported more progressive attitudes on challenging GBV. Boys from intervention schools reported statistically significantly more progressive attitudes on both indices: a difference of 4.5 percentage points ($p<0.01$) on challenging gender stereotypes and a difference of 5.4 percentage points ($p<0.01$) on challenging GBV. Girls from intervention schools reported statistically significant more positive attitudes on challenging GBV at a difference of 7.5 percentage points ($p<0.01$). (See Table 3)

Programme (AEP) and Other Factors Influencing Attitudes on Challenging Gender Stereotypes: Results from Multivariate Analyses

Table 4
Factors Affecting Students' Attitudes on Challenging Gender Stereotypes: OLS Results

	All students		**Boys**		**Girls**	
Background Characteristics	Coeffi-cient	95% CI	Coeffi-cient	95% CI	coeffi-cient	95% CI
Age	0.04	-0.02,0.11	0.01	-0.07,0.1	0.08*	-0.01,0.16
Sex						
Boys (ref.)						
Girls	1.35***	1.19,1.51				

Religion						
Hindu (ref.)						
Sikh	-1.00***	-1.25, -0.75	-1.03***	-1.3, -0.68	-0.93***	-1.29, -0.57
Others	-0.19	-0.45, 0.08	-0.41**	-0.77,-0.05	0.14	-0.25, 0.53
Caste						
Other (ref.)						
SCs	-0.37**	-0.7, -0.04	-0.19	-0.66, 0.27	-0.59**	-1.05, -0.13
STs	-0.67**	-1.11, -0.22	-0.56*	-1.17, 0.05	-0.76**	-1.4, -0.12
OBCs	0.02	-0.21, 0.24	0.03	-0.27, 0.33	-0.08	-0.42,0.27
Access to internet						
No (ref.)						
Yes	0.22**	0, 0.43	0.40**	0.07, 0.72	0.02	-0.25, 0.3
Father's profession						
Service (ref.)						
Business	-0.32***	-0.5, -0.14	-0.35***	-0.59, -0.1	-0.27**	-0.53, -0.02
Agriculture	-0.56***	-0.87, -0.26	-0.60***	-0.99, -0.21	-0.59**	-1.08, -0.09
Wage labour/ Not employed	-0.29	-0.66, 0.09	-0.55**	-1.04,-0.05	0.2	-0.37, 0.77
Mother's education						
Non-literate (ref.)						
Middle education completed	0.53**	0.1, 0.96	0.50*	-0.02, 1.03	0.63	-0.13, 1.39
Secondary education completed	0.42**	0.03, 0.8	0.23	-0.25, 0.71	0.86**	0.18, 1.54
Higher education completed	0.56***	0.17, 0.96	0.21	-0.28, 0.7	1.24***	0.55, 1.92
Type of school						
Comparison (ref.)						

Intervention	0.34***	0.18, 0.51	0.41***	0.18, 0.64	0.24*	-0.01, 0.49
N	**7,662**		**4,454**		**3,208**	

Note: *Significance level: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, *p<0.10*

The OLS regression results in Table 4 show girls reporting statistically significant more progressive attitudes on challenging gender stereotypes (coefficient: 1.35, p-value<0.01). In comparison to Hindus, the Sikh students show statistically significant less progressive attitudes towards challenging gender stereotypes, a pattern retained for both boys and girls.

In comparison to "Other" caste groups, students belonging to SCs (coefficient: -0.37, p-value<0.05) and STs (coefficient: -0.67, p-value<0.05) reported less progressive attitudes on challenging gender stereotypes. Among girls, those from SCs (coefficient: -0.59, p<0.05) and STs (coefficient: -0.76, p<0.05) reported statistically significantly less progressive attitudes.

Students with access to internet reported more progressive attitudes on challenging gender stereotypes (coefficient: 0.22, p-value<0.05), and this influence is retained among boys but not among girls.

In comparison to children of fathers in salaried jobs, those with fathers engaged in agriculture reported less progressive attitudes on challenging gender stereotypes (coefficient: -0.56, p-value<0.01), followed by fathers who had their own business (coefficient: -0.32, p-value<0.01). The influence of father's profession on attitudes of children in challenging gender stereotypes is retained among boys and girls.

Children of educated women reported more progressive attitudes towards challenging gender stereotypes. Children of women who had completed a college degree reported most progressive attitudes (coefficient: 0.56, p-value<0.001). Daughters of women who had acquired a college degree reported most progressive attitudes in challenging gender stereotypes (coefficient: 1.24, p-value<0.01) followed by daughters of women who had completed secondary education (coefficient: 0.86, p<0.05). Findings do not show similar consistent influence of mother's education on boys.

Findings suggest that AEP has positively influenced attitudes of students on challenging gender stereotypes (coefficient: 0.34, p-value<0.01). This positive influence is retained among both boys and girls.

Programme (AEP) and Other Factors Influencing Attitudes on Challenging GBV: Results from Multivariate Analyses

Table 5

Factors Affecting Students' Attitudes on Challenging Gender-based Violence: OLS Results

	All students		**Boys**		**Girls**	
Background Characteristics	Coefficient	95% CI	Coefficient	95% CI	Coefficient	95% CI
Age	0.14***	0.1, 0.19	0.09***	0.03, 0.15	0.22***	0.15, 0.28
Sex						
Boys (ref.)						
Girls	1.21***	1.1, 1.33				
Religion						
Hindu (ref.)						
Sikh	-0.52***	-0.71, -0.34	-0.69***	-0.95, -0.44	-0.29**	-0.57, -0.02
Others	0.15	-0.05, 0.35	0.16	-0.1, 0.43	0.14	-0.15, 0.43
Caste						
Other (ref.)						
SCs	-0.42***	-0.67, -0.18	-0.39**	-0.73, -0.06	-0.48***	-0.83, -0.13
STs	-0.37**	-0.7, -0.04	-0.39*	-0.84, 0.05	-0.29	-0.77, 0.19
OBCs	-0.02	-0.19, 0.15	-0.02	-0.24, 0.20	-0.05	-0.31, 0.21
Access to internet						
No (ref.)						
Yes	0.29***	0.14, 0.45	0.47***	0.23, 0.7	0.18*	-0.03, 0.39
Father's profession						
Service (ref.)						
Business	-0.18	-0.32, -0.05	-0.24*	-0.42, -0.06	-0.13	-0.32, 0.06
Agricultural	-0.25	-0.47, -0.02	-0.32**	-0.6, -0.03	-0.11	-0.48, 0.27
Wage Labour/ Not employed	-0.24*	-0.51, 0.04	-0.30	-0.66, 0.07	-0.09	-0.51, 0.34

Mother's education						
Non-literate (ref.)						
Middle education completed	0.11	-0.2, 0.43	0.06	-0.32, 0.45	0.23	-0.35, 0.8
Secondary education completed	0.06	-0.23, 0.34	-0.12	-0.47, 0.24	0.39	-0.12, 0.9
Higher education completed	0.67***	0.38, 0.96	0.45*	0.09, 0.81	1.06***	0.54, 1.57
Type of school						
Comparison (ref.)	0.29***	0.17, 0.42	0.21**	0.05, 0.38	0.41***	0.22, 0.59
Intervention						
N	**7,662**		**4,454**		**3,208**	

Note: *Significance level: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, *p<0.10*

The OLS regression results in Table 5 show that older students have statistically significantly more progressive attitudes towards challenging GBV (coefficient: 0.14, p-value<0.01) and this influence is retained in both boys and girls. Girls reported statistically significantly more progressive attitudes on challenging GBV (coefficient: 1.21, p-value<0.01).

In comparison to Hindus, the Sikh students show statistically significantly less progressive attitudes towards challenging GBV (coefficient: -0.52, p-value<0.01). This finding holds for both boys (coefficient: -0.69, p-value<0.01), and girls (coefficient: -0.29, p-value <0.05). In comparison with other caste groups, students belonging to SCs and STs reported less progressive attitudes on challenging GBV. Findings suggest a similar trend among both boys and girls for the SCs but not STs.

Students with access to internet reported more progressive attitudes on challenging GBV (coefficient: 0.29, p-value<0.01) and this influence is retained among both boys and girls.

Boys reported less progressive attitudes on challenging GBV if their fathers were engaged in agriculture (coefficient: -0.32, p<0.01) in comparison to those whose fathers were in salaried professions.

Mothers' higher education played an important role in developing progressive attitudes towards challenging GBV for all students and

particularly for girls (coefficient: 1.06, p<0.01).

Findings suggest that AEP positively influenced attitudes of adolescent students on challenging GBV (coefficient: 0.29, p-value<0.01). The positive influence of AEP is retained among boys (coefficient: 0.21, p-value<0.05) and girls (coefficient: 0.41, p-value<0.01). (See Table 5)

Discussion

Enabling adolescents to recognise and challenge gender-based discrimination, violation and harassment are important objectives of AEP, which aims at improving overall well-being of school-going adolescents. Using data from AEP evaluation survey, we analyse the factors influencing attitudes of adolescents in challenging gender stereotypes and GBV, as a proxy for predictable behaviours when faced with similar situations in real life. Adolescent and youth development in India is strongly affected by socio-economic-cultural contexts: caste, religion and the family's socio-economic level influence the conditions and possibilities of survival, attention to studies and encouragement for girls' education. The influence of these variables has been factored in determining the overall attitudes on gender stereotypes and GBV.

The findings suggest overall progressive attitudes among students towards challenging gender stereotypes and GBV. It is apparent that students may find it somewhat easier to recognise and challenge gender stereotypes than GBV. Gender stereotypes might be gradually dissolving, to some extent at least, given contemporary contexts in which girls are going in for education and jobs in every field, thus mitigating the harshness of rigidly defined gender roles, attributes and abilities. GBV may be harder for young people to recognise and challenge, forming as it does the tenacious core of patriarchy.

In comparison to boys, girls reported more progressive attitudes on both these domains. These findings are consistent with Youth Study findings (IIPS and Population Council, 2010) where girls reported more progressive attitudes towards challenging traditional gender roles, than boys (age group 15–24 years), for instance, 20 per cent of girls compared to 36 per cent young boys reported that educating boys is more important than educating girls; and 74 per cent girls in comparison to 57 per cent boys reported that girls should be allowed to take decisions about their own marriage. It is noteworthy that majority of girls reported very progressive attitudes on challenging gender stereotypes, which is an indicator for progressive social change. While it is essential that girls understand and resist gendered notions that have kept them in a secondary position since centuries, boys are lagging behind. A special effort seems to be required to positively influence boys'

mindsets. Given that the majority of perpetrators of GBV are men, it is extremely important to influence attitudes of male students, for overall long-term reduction in incidence of GBV. It is encouraging that findings from the survey suggest improvement in attitudes of boys on both gender stereotypes and GBV. These findings corroborate with existing evidence that with context-specific culturally relevant investments, it is possible to change attitudes and behaviours of young men in relatively short periods of time. Both the *Yari-dosti* (means friendship in Hindi) initiative for promoting gender equity, piloted in 2005–06 among young men from low-income communities in Mumbai (Verma *et al.,* 2006) and the Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS) which engaged adolescents in age group 12–14 years (Achyut, Bhatla, Khandekar, Maitra, and Verma, 2011) demonstrated positive changes in gender attitudes of those exposed to the interventions.

Findings from the present evaluation suggest that older adolescents have more progressive attitudes on challenging GBV, as compared to younger adolescents. GBV is a notoriously complex social reality, hence, we hypothesise that older adolescents are likely to have the maturity to develop a better understanding of the issue. Furthermore, AEP is initiated in Class IX (ages 14–15 years) and messages are reinforced in Class XI (ages 16–17 years).

Access to internet is related to more progressive attitudes especially for the boys. It is plausible that access to internet may be proxy to adolescents being able to navigate through relevant information independently and take more informed decisions.

The findings suggest that adolescents belonging to Sikh religion reported less progressive attitudes. However, we hypothesise that rather than attributing this association to a particular religion, geography may be a better explanation. Given the reality of India as a patriarchal society, boys are valued more than girls. However, there are variations within the country and northern parts of the country harbour more entrenched notions of gender-based discrimination. In this evaluation survey, the state of Punjab represents the northern region of the country and was one of the earliest to record adverse Child Sex Ratio (CSR) as low as 798 girls per 1000 boys for age group 0–6 years (Census 2001). Census 2011 shows some recovery in terms of CSR in Punjab, but it is still very low (846).

The present study is not able to explain the reasons for less progressive attitudes on gender stereotypes and GBV among adolescents from SCs and STs. It is acknowledged that SCs and STs have been at the periphery of mainstream development and hence young people from this background may not have sufficient exposure to challenge prevalent gender norms.

The finding that higher education among mothers is correlated with

more progressive attitudes among adolescents corroborates another school-based study with high school students in Bihar, India (Shekhar, Ghosh, and Panda, 2007) which suggests that mothers' education has an important bearing on attitudes and behaviours of adolescent children. Given the importance of mothers' education in shaping attitudes of adolescents, especially girls, it will be appropriate if AEP invests in addressing and engaging parents, particularly mothers.

In order to draw meaningful comparisons, analyses are limited to private schools, leaving out the public education system that is likely to enrol children from more deprived backgrounds. However, AEP is a large-scale programme that aims to improve the overall health and well-being of school-going adolescents and has not been evaluated before. Hence, the survey findings are encouraging in suggesting that initiatives such as AEP can serve as effective interventions to challenge prevalent discriminatory social norms. Multivariate analyses to ascertain programme effects control for certain background characteristics that are likely to influence attitudes on gender-based stereotypes and GBV. However, it is acknowledged that there may be other factors, such as area of residence (urban vs. rural), parents' attitudes towards these issues and others that may influence the attitudes being assessed but have not been included. Another limitation is the use of self-reported data which might be subject to response bias. However, careful attention has been given to minimise this limitation at all levels of survey design and implementation. In the design phase, attitudes towards gender stereotypes and GBV were explored through several real life situations, including a range of options from most progressive to regressive; survey instruments were pre-tested to ensure that questions were understood; and confidentiality of responses was ensured during data collection, thus encouraging honest reporting.

Although there is no clear evidence to show that any particular caste, religion or socio-economic strata is more prone to GBV or gender stereotypical attitudes than others, yet it is logical that somewhat different strategies may work with students from different contexts. This research is a rare effort to examine this terrain in the interests of ensuring that AEP programming may be refined to be equally relevant to students from varying socio-economic-cultural contexts.

Consistent with findings from similar studies; the results suggest that students exposed to AEP reported more progressive attitudes on challenging gender stereotypes and GBV. A study conducted with school and college students in Patna suggested that exposure to family life or sex education was associated with better knowledge on reproductive health issues in comparison to

similarly aged adolescents who were not exposed to this specific educational intervention (Shekhar *et al.*, 2007). Similarly, an intervention to promote youth health in Goa demonstrated that with appropriate interventions, it is possible to change attitudes and behaviours related to gender stereotypes and GBV (Balaji, Andrews, Andrew, and Patel, 2011).

The findings also suggest that AEP should make concerted efforts to engage with boys and parents, especially mothers. Specific targeted interventions may also be needed with socially disadvantaged groups. Given the reasonably high access to internet among adolescents, the programme may invest in internet-based learning to reach out to larger numbers as well as reinforce important messages.

With improving school enrolment and retention rates, schools can serve as crucial spaces to inculcate and promote progressive attitudes among young people to challenge discrimination and violation related to gender and sexuality. Given the prevalence of high levels of GBV in present-day India, and continuing gender discriminatory norms, the findings presented in this paper make a strong case for mainstreaming initiatives such as the Adolescents' Education Programme in school education.

Appendix

Vignettes and statements for constructing index on challenging gender stereotypes	%	% boys	% girls
1. Rajan likes to do housework like cutting vegetables, washing dishes and cleaning. But when his friends come home, he hides this from them. He fears that the boys will tease him and call him a 'sissy' or a girl. Which of the following statements do you agree with?			
Rajan should stop doing housework (score= -1)	5.1	6.4	3.4
Rajan is right in hiding the housework from his friends (score=-1)	10.6	12.9	7.4
If he tells his friends, Rajan might be a good influence on them (score=1)	41.4	39.6	43.9
Rajan should feel proud that he does housework and not hide it (score=1)	71.1	83.1	76.1
2. Kavita has been good in sports. Suddenly, when she turned fourteen she became shy and embarrassed to wear sports clothes, or to run, play or cycle. What do you think Kavita should do?			
Wear whatever she feels comfortable in and continue to play, run, cycle, etc. (score=1)	75.2	70.7	81.5

Stop playing as there is no future in sports for girls (score=-1)	2.4	3.3	1.3
Discuss with her teacher or anyone she trusts why she is feeling like this (score=1)	52.6	49.3	57.0
Push herself to wear what all other sportsmen/sportswomen wear (score=-1)	16.6	20.7	10.8
3. Arif and Niloufer are twins. Both of them are good painters and want to become artists. Their parents encourage Niloufer but discourage Arif. They feel that Arif needs to think about earning enough to support a family in the future. What do you think?			
Arif should give up art as his parents are right (score=-1)	7.6	3.8	6
Arif should inform his parents that he will pursue his interest in arts (score= 1)	55.4	60.8	57.6
Both Arif and Niloufer should explore study as well as career options as artists (score=1)	64.0	71.4	67.1
Arif should continue painting secretly (score=-1)	11.7	6.1	9.3
4. The following are some statements that you may have often heard. Some of these statements are based on biological difference, while others are based on people's mindsets. Give your opinion for each statement. (Based on-)			
Girls find mathematics difficult. They are better suited for home sciences. People's mindset (score=1) Biological differences/ Not attempted (score=-1)	 86.1 13.5	 92.5 7.3	 88.8 10.9
Boys can handle technical abstract things much better than girls. People's mindset (score=1) Biological differences/ Not attempted (score=-1)	 71.5 28.1	 82.0 17.8	 75.9 23.8
Women become mothers, that is why they are better care givers than men. People's mindset (score=1) Biological differences/ Not attempted (score=-1)	 61.3 38.3	 60.7 39.1	 61.1 38.6
Women are more emotional than men People's mindset (score=1) Biological differences/ Not attempted (score=-1)	 55.0 44.7	 58.3 41.5	 56.3 43.4

Men are better than women at controlling their emotions and therefore do not cry People's mindset (score=1) Biological differences/ Not attempted (score=-1)	 55.3 44.4	 60.5 39.3	 57.5 42.3
All girls at an early age are interested in cooking, decorating and managing People's mindset (score=1) Biological differences/ Not attempted (score=-1)	 80.2 19.4	 85.7 14.1	 82.5 17.2
Challenging Gender stereotype index — higher value of index implies positive attitude related to challenging gender stereotypes: Mean 5.7 (s.d., 3.5) [range: -9, 12] [possible range: -12, 12]			
Vignettes and statements for constructing attitude on challenging gender-based violence	**%**	**% boys**	**% girls**
1. Monica and Sabina go to see a film. On the way out of the hall, they are teased and harassed by a man who passes obscene comments. Your advice to Monica and Sabina would be to:			
Confront the man and warn him: Unlikely/ circumstantial (score=1)	53.0	46.9	61.5
Seek support from others around (score=1)	33.4	37.6	27.7
Not go to see films in cinema halls (score=-1)	5.3	6.7	3.4
Go with parents or brothers, who can protect them (score=-1)	36.9	38.0	35.3
Complain to the cinema manager and insist they act to make the hall safe for women (score=1)	58.4	56.3	61.3
2. Mohit is ten years old. His uncle often comes over to stay. He brings lots of toffees and biscuits for him. He also insists that he will sleep in Mohit's room. At times he tries to touch him in ways Mohit does not like. Mohit's parents notice that he has become very quiet and withdrawn. Which of the following statements in your opinion are correct?			
Mohit is misunderstanding his uncle's affectionate behaviour (score=-1)	34.2	38.3	28.4
Mohit's uncle is trying to sexually abuse him (score=1)	23.2	25.7	19.8

Mohit's parents should try to understand why he has become so quiet and withdrawn (score=1)	59.8	52.3	70.3
Mohit's parents should keep quiet and not ask any questions as this could upset the uncle (score=-1)	5.7	7.2	3.7
Mohit's parents should not let the uncle be alone with him (score=1)	41.8	36.7	48.9
3. A male school games teacher frequently touches some girls longer than necessary while instructing them. He sometimes brushes their breasts. This makes them very uncomfortable. In your opinion the girls should:			
Keep quiet out of embarrassment (score=-1)	2.2	3.0	1.0
Talk to a teacher or parent they trust (score=1)	58.9	53.4	66.5
Make a complaint to the school authorities (score=1)	68.8	69.9	67.3
Discuss with other girls to find out if they have a similar experience (score=1)	42.2	37.5	48.8
Confront the teacher themselves: Unlikely (score=1)	22.0	20.5	24.1
Ignore out of fear of the teacher (score=-1)	2.7	3.3	2.0
4. Which are the circumstances where you think a man is justified in beating his wife?			
Not attempted	0.8	1.0	0.5
She argues with him or the family	9.0	11.2	5.9
She dresses in a manner to attract attention	7.2	9.4	4.2
She is unfaithful to her husband	11.8	13.8	8.9
She cooks badly	0.8	1.2	0.2
She spends money without permission	1.5	2.0	0.7
She gives birth only to daughters	1.7	1.4	2.1
She neglects her children (score=-1)	3.7	5.0	1.9
Under no circumstances should a man beat his wife (score=1)	63.6	55.0	75.6
Challenging gender-based violence index — higher value of index imply positive attitude related to challenging gender-based violence: Mean 4.0 (s.d., 2.6) [range: -5, 11] [possible range: -7, 11]			

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