

# Interviewing an adolescent: developmental issues



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Adolescence is a stage of development in human growth between childhood and adulthood it extends mainly over the teenage period and comes to an end legally when majority age is reached. It is characterized by the drastic physical changes that are occurring in their bodies. The dramatic and sudden physical changes they are experiencing naturally makes the stage to be full of self-consciousness, curiosity, and self concern on what goes on in their bodies, bodily changes, and surrounding environment; they compare themselves and their bodies with those of their peers. Adolescents normally undergo many health problems during their human development and growth, thus the main issue of this project is to highlight some of these health problems and give attention on how it has an effect on growth of the adolescents.

The adolescent developmental issue is chosen due to the huge impact health issues pose on youth development. Adolescents' health problems are rampant in our current society and there is an urgent need to address them unless the youth faces a serious developmental growth that can ruin their future lives. These problems are normally complex and need an all-inclusive biopsychosocial approach.

A great amount of knowledge is gained in this paper, one is able to understand the nature of adolescence health problems and their health needs. Through the paper one is able to learn health-risk behaviors and related health concerns that adolescence pass through in life and the corresponding means of addressing these problems. I hope to learn the various measures of dealing with adolescence health problems and the

specific needs of the youths and means to improve and attain their various special health needs.

In order to understand well the various health problems faced by the adolescence, an interview with a special needs health expert was sought. Dr. Jones is famous psychological doctor; he deals with health problems in general and frequently handles cases of adolescence. He heads the department of Mental Unit in a local hospital. He holds a PhD in Psychology, masters in Clinical Health and he has been in the forefront in handling adolescence health problems among other health issues. Dr. Jones was chosen for the interview due to his immense knowledge and experience in handling adolescent's problems, he has been practicing his profession for almost thirty years now and in many occasions has been helping the adolescents cope up with the psychological problems they undergo and in thus he is related to the topic of this project.

## **Literature Review**

Adolescence is the most important stage in the development of human life. According to Marjorie and Phyllis (2003), the transitory stage is characterized by drastic changes and the several physical changes that make adolescence to have an extreme confused mental state as well. Besides the drastic changes faced by adolescents and general issues, health concerns are also a significant issue.

Most of the literature on studies conducted on adolescence health has a specific focus on drug abuse, sexual health and reproduction, mental health, nutrition and exercise. Adolescents are facing dramatic changes in their

bodies and as young individuals, they are struggling to gain independence from the parents, they are forming relationships with friends, and aim at completing their studies for them to join social systems and the working class. Since health and development are correlated developmental issues, adolescents' health is as important as adolescents' development and assumes rather important fraction.

Among the recent work in this course is the work done by Vilma and Jolanta (2010) in their book Theory-based oral health education in adolescents. According to the authors, there is a close link between human development and health related character of adolescents and the health status of adults. Therefore it is necessary for interventions to be incorporated at an appropriate timing so as to ensure that success in health promotion is achieved. Vilma and Jolanta (2010), argue that for appropriate health on adolescence to be attained, health education approach is to be used which focuses on the kind of lifestyle, skills and knowledge, attitudes and personal behavior. During adolescence, unhealthy and unwanted behaviors are developed which become hard if not futile to abandon during adulthood and therefore need to intervene in adolescence period is important, this also shows how important is one's health during adolescence as individual's life is built at adolescence. The authors have that despite the various theories on health there is no one agreed intervention mode that is most efficient in adolescents' health promotion. The various attempts to modify human development and behavior owe to be through understanding of principles of social behavior, interaction and developmental processes. The aim of this literature is to improve the probability of effectiveness in trying to treat

negative social behavior. This theory is advocating for the use of effective methods for bringing behavioral change.

It is unfortunate that not all potentials to promote the health status of adolescence have been exploited; there is ample opportunity in areas of medicine that needs to be fully exploited. It is noted from this theory that the most effective way of handling health of adolescence is by using psychological models and theories rather than using conventional instructions. During adolescence, motive for health are not cognitive but emotional, this is because adolescence tend to value their outward appearance for example teeth, fresh breath, and image as a way to successful social interaction. It is thus through the same that health education in this category owe to be placed on the social implications and not health implications. Vilma and Jolanta (2010) suggest that adolescents' health failure is shown through irrational thinking and impulsive behaviors.

Psychological models and theories concerning health and targeting specific age groups for example adolescents, might bear fruitful results molding health character and related behaviors than conventional methods. This theory argues that family plays an essential role in social support networks dealing with health education and related activities. While one is still young, the family members have a huge influence on his character, they are reported to be an essential source of health values, beliefs and habits. It is later in adolescence and early adulthood that parents and other members of the family act as supporting agents of specific health behaviors. It is noted that in adolescence, adolescents do not have material resources to buy necessary materials used in health, and thus they depend on parental

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willingness to provide specific materials such as fluoride dentifrices and toothbrushes or provision of appropriate food that boost their health. Accordingly, adolescence healthcare cannot be possible to attain without parents and other family members. It is known fact that the family attachment to the adolescence keeps reducing as peer influence increases. As adolescents grow older, their responsibility for their health shifts from parents to them but their emotional, social, and physical support and involvement by parents is still vital for their development.

Most literatures and researches that are being conducted or have been contacted all seek to find means to influence adolescents to adopt healthy behaviors. Health development and promotion research on adolescents are still being undertaken by various discipline not limited to psychology, sociology and medicine areas. Many theories by various scholars have been suggested to evaluate adolescents' behavior and behavioral change (Petrie, Bunn, & Byrne, 2007). This theories considers effects of a model of character change as portrayed in protection motivation theory (Rogers, 1983). Studies have shown that adolescents' involvement in substance trade could be a lead way to unlawful substance and drug use (Petrie et al., 2007). It is to be remembered that no attention has been accorded in the scientific literature to the extensive research findings and prevention programs that seeks to address adolescents' drug abuse and involvement in other negative behaviors (Petrie et al., 2007).

Protection motivation theory (PMT) is one of the famous theories relating to adolescents' health. It is a theory of behavioral change seeking to justify and explain the cognitive mediation process of behavioral change when one

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faces a threat and how one adjusts to it. This theory asserts that environment and personal components presents a significant risk to adolescent's health. It states that environmental and individual factors combine to pose a potential health threat.

According to Marjorie and Phyllis (1996), health status of adolescents are numerous and are at a high risk mainly because of their exposure to illnesses and disorders that can be prevented. Adolescents face the problems of drug abuse, violence, and many health-related factors and they attributes all these problems to poverty levels, literacy rate, family failure, and dysfunction. Within the adolescents, general population racial and ethnic minorities have high chances of developing health problems and disorders.

According to Matton (2005) the most common problems in adolescence are related to adolescents growth and development; there are diseases from childhood that continue into adolescence development; mental illnesses, health disorders; and the many undesirable social behaviors among them violence, injury, trouble with law, early pregnancies, and sexually transmitted diseases. Unintentional but careless injuries resulting from negative behaviors such as car accidents and injuries that are as a result of personal violence and are leading causes of adolescent's health problems, early death, and disability among the teenagers. Matton (2005), reckons that puberty is another huge health problem on the part of adolescence and concern parties especially when it occurs before nine years in a boy or before age of seven in a girl. Accordingly, precocious puberty is a condition that is brought about by the early release of specific sex hormones called gonadotropin and it is normally released from the pituitary gland. These

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hormones have an effect of promoting the development of ovaries or testes which in turns releases other sex hormones including estrogen or testosterone, these hormones are known to stimulate puberty. The early release gonadotropin may be due to a tumor or any other abnormality in the pituitary gland

In handling this situation, Matton (2005) recommends that should a child shows signs of premature, drastic progressing, or abnormal puberty, the doctors should take an X-ray of the hand and wrist so as to evaluate whether the bones are mature. He notes that if a child bone age is very complex, a comprehensive evaluation owe to be performed which may involve test of blood hormone levels. Ultrasounds of pelvis and adrenal glands could also be performed to identify adrenal tumors. Premature developments like pubic hair, underarm growth, and breast do not necessarily imply there is a problem but regular checkups are recommended

## **Interview Questions**

The interview questions posed to Dr. Jones are:

Please state your names?

What are your academic qualification?

Which fields are you specializing in?

How many years of experience do you have in health psychology practice?

Do you handle cases of adolescents only or all cases?

Which cases do adolescents report?

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What could be the real causes behind their social behaviors?

What can be done to ensure that most cases that are being reported by the adolescents are dealt with properly?

Among the reported cases are there any relation?

How do you as a professional solve such cases?

Do you think health problems are being given the required attention in the society?

Could the health problems be as a result of peer influence?

What can the family and society as a whole do to ensure that these health problems are dealt with?

What are the consequences of this health problems?

Do adolescents health problems affects the final state of adulthood?

What are the advisable means to handle these problems?

As professionals in these field what are you doing to ensure that adolescents problems get relevant attention from government and concern private institutions?

## **Interview Results**

From the interview it is to be noted that drug use, sexual behaviors, mental illness, eating problems and emotional problems are major problems to adolescents health, the interview and the comprehensive literature has

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revealed that drug use is positively correlated with the level of health.

Adolescent involvement in illegal drugs can create many kinds of mental and physical health problems. Drug abuse impairs an individual life and his or her productive nature, it reduces the quality of life and is a threat to one's mental state. Among the substances that was revealed to be consumed by adolescents includes addictive substances like tobacco, marijuana, alcohol, and crack among others. From the interview, the most consumed addictive drugs are alcohol and tobacco. This is according to the records of adolescents reporting to the healthcare facility to seek help. The Doctor has that all of these drugs have significant effects on an adolescent's health, they interfere the normal working of one's brain and in return affect the whole behavior of a person. The use of the substance by adolescents and other drug users pose a burden in society by raising cost of living and economic costs to the institutions that provide basic necessities such as healthcare. Alcohol and tobacco are very harmful especially to the individual, family, schools, workplace, and the community.

It is yet to be known what proportion of all adolescents substance users and abusers end up having serious health and social problems, however it is a known fact that illegal drug users regularly ends up having serious cancer diseases and related complications. It is important to note that since drug abuse is not committed by the entire adolescence population, it is important to evaluate the behaviors of affected youths and the general population for them to be given the relevant attention. It was also noted that use of drugs in the earliest stages of human development is the most risky time.

Another problem noted during the interview is the rising cases of obesity and diseases that are comparable. Many of the adolescent patients that report to health facilities have complaints dealing with their physical body. Dr. Jones notes that a large number of people are suffering from illnesses that could have been prevented or diverted by a regular exercises, it is noted that with regular exercise, it is possible for one to avoid heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis, and can provides a chance for one to develop talent as a leisure activity. Arguably, regular physical activity by the adolescence can avoid the chances of dying at a young age, catching heart disease and developing cancer. The probability of developing diabetes is reduced because all unused calories and sugars are burnt during exercise process.

Regular exercising enables one to do away with feelings of depression and distress; it helps one to manage weight and to develop healthy bones, skin, muscles, and besides all that it improves one's appearance and psychological mind. Exercise is an essential tool in monitoring everyday's stress and depression and controlling disease that are brought by the contemporary lifestyles. It has been noted that there is an increasing number of problems during adolescence are brought about by lack of exercises and the current mode of living. In the current society activities that could ensure that one used energy and burnt unnecessary calories are not there anymore. Technology have made things easier for human beings, task previously done by human are now done by machines leaving people idle which is unhealthy. In order to do away with the problem, it is advisable for one to have frequent

physical exercises, such as jogging for at least twenty minutes, playing soccer, or any other activity that uses energy.

Through the interview, it was revealed that the role of the family has a great influence on the adolescence problems. Through actions and examples, the family molds the lives of their children from conception till adulthood. Even though it is seen that friends and peers have a greater manipulation and takes greater importance in adolescence, the doctor revealed that parents and family at large plays an important role. He demonstrate the continued importance of family and parents in molding the character behavior and in making a choice of peers and friends as they go through developmental stages in their growth. The values and norms that adolescence grew up with in the family setting has a great role, good parenting skills, shared family norms and virtues, shared activities and inspired role modeling contributes entirely to adolescence health and development.

A typical way to ensure problems faced by adolescence are minimized is by having a close relationship between parents and adolescents, maintaining a healthy and transparent communication, and ensuring parental support and guidance more importantly in adolescence stage when adolescence are going through rapid bodily changes. According to Jenkins (2007), adolescence having a good character and positive relationships with their families and parents have minimal chances of engaging in negative social activities, he has that they are less likely to involve in bad and risky behaviors among them smoking, fighting, sexual vices, and drinking. He has that the chances of developing depression are less; they rather have a positive perception of life and well-being.

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According to Jenkins (2007) the family and the surrounding environment has a huge influence in development of adolescence in terms of emotional, physical and psychological support. The existence of a close relationship, good parenting ethics, open communication and good role models ensure the development of healthy adolescence.

Mental health problems are another type of health problems the adolescence experience. It is possible according to Chown (2008) for mental health problem to arise during late childhood and during adolescence. He notes that this problem can be avoided by improving and enhancing the development of social skills, technical problem-solving skills, and having self-confidence. The same techniques can also be used to minimize the occurrence of mental disorders, anxiety, stress, depression, eating disorders, and many related negative behaviors such as sexual vices, drug abuse, and violent character. Chown (2008) argues that health practitioners should be competent enough to understand the stage of adolescence, to detect mental health issues prior to its development, and should be able to provide relevant response regarding treatment which includes proper guidance and counseling, psychological and behavioral therapy, and in demanding cases prescribe psychotropic medication.

Adolescents are at risk of contracting of HIV infection; this could be explained by the huge curiosity they have, the want to know what goes on in their bodies, the experiences one feels and many unexploited avenues. It is a significant problem posing health challenges to the teenagers. HIV prevention strategies aims at reducing infection by ensuring that there is abstinence and unfitting sexual behaviors are discouraged. The need to <https://assignbuster.com/interviewing-an-adolescent-developmental-issues/>

educate adolescents to avoid too many sexual parties is imminent if at all abstinence is not possible; there is also a need for condoms also to be availed for adolescence who are sexually active. Attention should also be given to teens that have already contracted HIV; they need treatment, care, emotional and physical support and to develop positive attitudes in living with it.

Violence is another problem that is considered to contribute to poor health problems in adolescence and the necessary life skills enriched with everyday life experience is necessary in order for them to cope with violent character. They should be able to tolerate any negative outcomes and handle them in an appropriate manner, social programmers' relating to adolescence development are important in handling and reducing violent behavior that can affect their health. Institutions of learning through teachers and disciplinary staff should develop techniques of problem solving and advocate nonviolent way of disciplining as this is effective in lowering violence.

## **Synthesis**

Arguably teenage development can be an emotional assault step for all concerned. At these developmental stages a gulf can arise between parents and teenagers during adolescence. This is due to the many changes that their bodies are experiencing. It is a time of dramatic physical development and insight emotional changes. All these changes can be exciting but it can also be annoying and confusing and one may feel uneasy in all these situations. Puberty is the adolescence stage characterized by the dramatic physical and emotional changes in adolescence, it begins at eleven years for female sex and it is rather late for male sex; it occurs at fourteen. It is a fact <https://assignbuster.com/interviewing-an-adolescent-developmental-issues/>

now that the age of puberty is dropping perhaps because of the quality of food that is currently consumed and thus it is possible for children to reach puberty at an earlier age. Among the changes that happen to girls includes menstrual periods, pubic hair, breast growth and under-arm growth.

Developmental changes in male sex include voice changes, body growth and pubic hair growth, and wet dreams. All these developmental changes have a role to play when adolescent's health is considered. It is in this stage that adolescence become very concerned about appearance and thus need a lot of support and assurance most importantly when their peers and friends are forming opinions on themselves. Adolescence growth and health development requires plenty of time and energy, moral support and guidance should also be prevailed.

Most health problems that are evident are as a result of other related problems including emotional problems, sexual problems, behavioral problems, school problems, trouble with the law, and eating problem among others. Emotional problems could be detected through signs such as eating too much, oversleeping and delusion. Too much anxiety may result in occurrence of phobias and panic attacks. Sexual problem concern how adolescents conduct themselves when confronted with compromising situations. The rapid physical changes that occur at adolescence could be disturbing and worrying to some adolescents mostly when one do not have a strong personality and are shy.

According to Matton (2005), adolescent's problems ranges from their personals problems to those of environmental setting. Adolescence experience sexual problems, school problems among others. He went ahead <https://assignbuster.com/interviewing-an-adolescent-developmental-issues/>

to identify the sexual issues that teens faces, among them is the risks of early pregnancies, risks of HIV infection, sexual harassment by adults, and risks of sexual identity; either homosexual or heterosexual. More than half of teenagers in the UK will have involved themselves with sexual acts before the age of sixteen and therefore the risk of pregnancy is an imminent problem in adolescents health life. It is also noted that sexually transmitted diseases could be on the rise if appropriate measures are not implemented, HIV infection and transmission and AIDS are becoming more common even with increase guidance and awareness.

Sensitive emotional and psychological support needs to be availed to the teenagers, clear guidance and relevant information about sex and sexual experiences are essential in ensuring that they have a picture of the possible consequences. Parents, teachers, guardians, schools, family, society, doctors, and family planning clinics owe to be aggressive in the sensitization of these young individuals because they see them as role models and take orders from them. Adolescents select their peers carefully depending on how they perceive one another; how their parents and those they are under say about them. Undesired sexual behaviors such as engaging in risky, unprotected sex portrays that one is lacking emotionally. Instances of committing suicide can also be thought as adolescents' health problems. There have also been cases where teenagers involve themselves with risky lifestyle; adolescents who engage in risky health behaviors are known to have a tendency to engage in other risky health behavior as well.

Adolescence and parents normally complain about one another's behavior, parents normally feel like they have lost control or influence over their child

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and conversely, adolescents feel like the pressure is too much and want their parents to be clear and consistent about rules and boundaries, but at the same time may resent any restrictions on their growing freedom and ability to decide for themselves.

School problems that adolescence experience includes refusal to go to school which can be due to hardship in separating from parents, being righteous and becoming easily depressed because they may not achieve their targets as they want to. It can occur due to disturbed family life they have experienced which might have involved early separation from a parent or death of a parent.

Another problem concerning adolescent's health is eating habits. It was noted by Jenkins (2007) that eating problems are increasing in the current society, adolescents are being manipulated by various adverts concerning weight maintenance. Most influencing are those adverts on the media showing celebrities with slim bodies and others with developed muscles, this has made adolescence to lose track on healthy eating habits and engage in undesirable eating disorders. Gaining weight is their problem, for example if an adolescent is overweight, he or she is subject to criticism, one can be made fun of. In this case they are more likely to have a negative self-perception and even become depressed. This according to Jenkins (2007) may call for a measure to cut weight and results to poor eating habits, which worsens the health problems.

The role of social institutions such as families, society, culture, schools, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and gender are noted to contribute towards

the health development of adolescents. Adolescents spend most of their time in schools and therefore teachers and counselors play a huge role in their health and general developments. They should provide programs that include all life aspects ranging from academics, socioeconomics, personal and career which improve the way teenagers resolve emotional, social or behavioral problems. Effective guidance programmers are important and crucial elements in improving teenagers' health and for them to have a clear focus or sense of direction.

Family is the most important among the social institutions in an adolescent's health; it is a source of values and norms and where informal education occurs. Petrie (2007) notes that parents and other family members play a significant role in the early childhood health developments. It is this stage that beliefs and habits are instilled. He asserts that parents and other family members provide reinforcing force of specific health related behaviors later in the adolescent's stage. Family and parents are an essential link between health and adolescents and whole childhood development in general.

Indeed, the needs of children in life change as they get older and consequently parenting roles change. Even though the responsibility for health development shifts from parents to individual adolescents, the social support and involvement of parents is still very important. In addition, adolescents usually have a good understanding of how their parents will react to their certain behaviors.

Gender also plays an important role in adolescents' health. It is known that male sex is more prone to negative social behaviors like drug abuse,

drinking, smoking, and violence. Female sex is prone to sexual harassment, early unwanted pregnancies, and likely to be abused by employers.

Socioeconomic has to do with the resources that are required to acquire medical care and other amenities . Adolescents do not have means to meet their health demand but rather depend on parents and other family members. Culture and ethnicity varies across the country, therefore the attention on adolescents health varies across ethnic and cultural.

## **Conclusion**

Adolescence is a human developmental stage considered largely as a difficult one, it is therefore necessary for all attention to be accorded since this stage has a direct link to the kind of adults a society would want to have in the future. In order to keep adolescent's health at desirable state, positive parenting is advised, trust is important in winning the adolescents.

Accordingly, parents, society and people surrounding them are necessary to be honest and open while sharing information with them. They owe to be honest and always transparent on sensitive social issues such as drug use, sex, , and drinking; they should explain every negative side of these social problems. The main challenge for future studies are not only to find effective ways to change adolescents character but also to be able to achieve outcomes that can be maintained and able to sustain positive behavior of teenagers. Understanding the adolescent status of health is an important ingredient for success. Most theories-based approaches to character modification has been successfully applied in various areas of health, it could also be a better option to conventional health promotion in adolescents.

It is high time that government and concern nongovernmental organization joined forces and accord the necessary attention to adolescent's health problems. Responsible authorities need to analyze research findings from specialists and determine the best policies to adapt. It is vital that real issues behind adolescents' health problems are uncovered and dealt with. Leaving teenagers exposed to these health problems is a clear way of ruining the future generation since health is proved to be a link between future responsible citizens and current adolescents.

It is largely agreed that parents, family, religion, culture, ethnicity, schools, and peers have a significant impact on adolescent's health development and growth. It is necessary for all these social elements to understand various developmental problems that pertains to adolescents in order for them to provide support and guidance wherever possible.