

Sri Lankan Society in Transition: Changing Patterns of Sexual Behaviour and Sexually Transmitted Diseases

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According to the World Bank categorizations, Sri Lanka is not a low-income country anymore; it has become a middle income country with the increase of per capita income. It is obvious that the development could be leading to a huge social, cultural and attitudinal change of the society. One such change in Sri Lankan society is, increasing sexual behavior, especially among adolescents and youth. In addition, recent data in health sector reflects a change in patterns of sexually transmitted infections (STI's) in Sri Lanka. This paper attempts to examine the underlining demographic and socio-economic factors affecting the changes in sexual behavior and STI's in Sri Lanka. Secondary data from various public institutions and non-governmental organizations has been used in this study. The study found several direct and indirect covariant of for these changes. Some of them are attitudinal changes, technological development and widespread of social networks, family disputation, increase of internal and international migration, unplanned youth and adolescent sexual activities, increase in female labour force participation, lack of knowledge on sexual and reproductive health among adolescent and youth, changes in family structure and youth vulnerability. It was highlighted that increase in prevalence of pre-marital and extra-marital sex might have contributed to a considerable increase in sexually transmitted diseases. Even though pre-marital and extra-marital relationships comparatively high in western societies, the level of sexual and reproductive health education is also high in those countries. However, in Sri Lanka, rapid increase in sexual activities could be seen without having access to proper sexual and reproductive health education. Thus the prevention from STI's could be low in Sri Lanka and probability of spreading STI's might be higher due to lack of knowledge. Therefore, the study claims the importance of increasing awareness programmes on STI's and ways of protection in order to have a healthy youth population in the future in Sri Lanka.

Key words: *Pre-Marital; Reproductive Health; Sexual Behaviour; STIs, Youth.*