



Dating Patterns of Young Adults during Navratri Festival of India in the City of Surat

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ABSTRACT

Surat is a highly urbanized and cosmopolitan city of the traditional state of Gujarat. The festival of Navratri provided us with the unique opportunity to study for the variables having a significant impact on dating especially amongst the collegaites. This study was carried among 133 young adults for understanding their dating patterns during Navratri festival of India in the city of Surat of District Gujarat. It needs mention that dating is gradually gaining momentum in India especially among the young adults more so during socially acceptable events as Navratri. Newspapers have reported of increase abortions following this event pointing to the need for our interventions for safer sexual practices. Scant medical literature is found pertaining to Navratri and dating hence this preliminary study.

Keywords: Dating, Navratri, STD, HIV, Contraception

INTRODUCTION

"Dating" is a dynamic term in the 21st century, with far fetching meanings and implications. Dating assumes greater significance given the present times. Surat is a highly urbanized and cosmopolitan city of the traditional state of Gujarat. The festival of Navratri provided us with the unique opportunity to study for the variables having a significant impact on dating especially amongst the collegaites. The collegaites have been identified as among the individuals with the maximum chances of dating and engaging in unsafe sex during Navratri as revealed by numerous social studies as reported by leading newspapers of Surat, including interviews of Doctors.

Additionally Navratri was chosen for the following reasons. Firstly the Navratri celebration lasts for 9-10 days extending from the evenings till late into the night. It is one of the rare and socially acceptable occasions for staying out late. Parents are more liberal about deadlines for returning home. It

needs mention that Navratri occupies the unique distinction of being the largest dance program hosted any place in the globe. Navratri, in the present era has become highly commercialized and increasingly youngsters from all fields and interests participate. Not only Gujaratis but also young adults from other parts of the country find Navratri to be an easy and an amusing way to socialize. Usually youngsters identify with different meanings of the word dating as this is a relatively newcomer among the social norms in terms social interactions of friendly and romantic relationships.

Navratri is often associated with dating and sex especially in the younger generations. It is followed by a period of increased abortions⁴. Some parents employ bouncers to keep tabs on their daughters. Yet these are newspaper reportings and as yet we have failed to come across any medical research work on Navratri and dating. Despite the fact of newspaper articles the fact is that Navratri continues its fervor. This demands for generation

of an increased awareness among youngsters about the correct knowledge and attitude towards safe sexual practices⁵. This paper attempts to do preliminary assessment about this issue.

METHODOLOGY

In order to make an accessible study for youngsters, our team prepared a Google form of our survey questions during Navratri. Having distributed the form on online platforms we recorded the responses of college students. This study comprises of online surveys filled by over 133 college students aged 17 and above in Surat. This study included students from streams of science, commerce, arts, engineering and medical/paramedical courses. These college students have residence in urban localities of Surat.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

In this study a total 133 students could be studied comprising of 76 (57.1%) males and 54 (40.6%) females whereas 2.3% did not prefer to reveal their gender. These students comprised of mainly 58.6 % from medical and paramedical students whereas least were from arts field.

From the tables it can be seen that majority of our respondents were unmarried. For them the implication of Navratri was mainly of having a physical and emotion relationship followed by an open or casual relationship For them the implication of Navratri was mainly of having a physical and emotion relationship followed by an open or casual relationship and these made up 62.4% of the sample implying the need of urgent means of birth control measures. Majority of them (69.2) opined that the ideal age of dating is 18 to 24 years. Coffee shops/ restaurants (57%) were identified as their preferred place of going on a date implying the possibilities of putting up safe sex practices as these establishments are approachable. However well over a third of the respondents opined a somewhat secluded place being their preferred venue giving perhaps some clue of their inclinations.

Table 1: Perception and practices related to dating among participants (n=133)

Variables	Students (%)
Dating according to you implies?	
Emotional relationship	15 (11.3)
Friendship	16 (12)
Long-term relationship	19 (14.3)
Open or Casual relation	36 (27.1)
Physical & Emotional relationship	47 (35.3)
What is the right age to start dating?	
<13 years	3 (2.3)
13 - 18 years	26 (19.5)

18 - 24 years	92 (69.2)
> 24 years	10 (7.5)
No response given	2 (1.5)
Where would you prefer to go on a Date?	
Coffee shops/ Restaurants	77 (57)
Jogging tracks	5 (3.6)
Theatre	4 (3.0)
Some lonely place	17 (12.8)
Parks or gardens	18 (13.8)
Other	9 (6.8)
Malls	2 (1.5)
No response given	1 (0.8)
Is Navratri a right time for dating?	
No	46 (34.6)
Yes	84 (63.2)
No response given	3 (2.3)
Have you ever been on a Date?	
No	47 (35.3)
Yes	85 (63.9)
No response given	1 (0.8)
Have you ever dated during Navratri?	
No	94 (70.7)
Yes	37 (27.8)
No response given	2 (1.5)
Is Navratri a convenient event for dating?	
No	52 (39.1)
Yes	78 (58.6)
No response given	3 (2.3)
Should young people date?	
No	16 (12)
Yes	115 (86.5)
No response given	2 (1.5)
During Navratri which type of person (s) would you prefer to date?	
No response given	9 (6.8)
Colleague	20 (15.0)
Friend	43 (32.3)
Good looking stranger	40 (30.0)
Internet or Chat friend / Text buddy / Tinder or other Social Media friend	17 (12.8)
Person living in neighborhood	4 (3)
If you have dated during Navratri in the past then the number of partners?	
No response given	72 (54.1)
more than one partner	6 (4.5)
with one partner	55 (41.3)
Could your parents know that you might be dating during Navratri?	
No response given	17 (12.8)
No	76 (57.1)
Yes	40 (30.1)
How do you make sure that your chances of dating are good during?	
No response given	23 (17.3)
Good ornaments	5 (3.8)
Good perfumes	20 (15.0)
Wear good dresses	85 (63.9)
Have you faced any problem with dating during Navratri?	
No response given	39 (29.3)
No	70 (52.6)
Yes	24 (18)
How do you make sure that your chances of dating are good during?	
No response given	23 (17.3)
Good ornaments	5 (3.8)
Good perfumes	20 (15)
Wear good dresses	85 (63.9)
How would you date your overall dating experience?	
Average	24 (18)
Bad	13 (9.8)
Good	64 (48.1)
No response given	32 (24)

Table -2: Knowledge related to STD/HIV

Variables	Participants (%)
Do you sometimes could have physical relationship without using a contraceptive?	
Yes	121 (91)
No	12 (9.8)
Do you have an idea about STDs?	
Yes	116 (87.2)
No	17 (12.8)
Do you have idea about AIDS?	
Yes	114 (85.7)
No	19 (14.2)
What should a girl / woman do after having sex without the use of contraceptive?	
Don't know	12 (9)
Emergency contraceptive pills	78 (58.9)
Immediately clean vagina after sex	31 (23.3)
Contact to doctors/ gynecologist	12 (9)
Safe sex according to you is?	
Not respondent	6 (4.5)
Using condom	106 (79.7)
Being faithful to your one partner	13 (9.8)
Emergency contraception	8 (6)

The majority (63.2%) opined that Navratri is the right time for dating and an equal number (63.9%) had actually been on a date including the Navratri (27.8%) period. Well over half (58.6%) opined that Navratri is convenient event for dating with a bigger number (86.5%) agreeing that young people should date.

Friend (32.3%) followed by surprisingly good looking strangers (30%) comprised the people likely to be dated. Surprisingly nearly a third (30.1) respondents were aware that their parents were aware of their dating and they took pains to improve their chances of dating such as by wearing good dresses (63.9%). 18% respondents had opined that they had faced some problem with dating during Navratri

and these are the persons we can start with for our safer sex interventions.

Table 2 reveals that majority (91%) of the respondents know about having physical relationship without using contraceptive. Maximum (58.9%) respondents opined that girl/woman should use emergency contraceptive pills if having sex without use of contraceptives, whereas very few prefer to go to doctor.

CONCLUSION

Majority participants believe that young people should date and Navratri opined by the most as the right time for dating. One third people like to date with good looking strangers. Surprisingly nearly a third respondents were aware that their parents were aware of their dating. Awareness about use of contraceptive during physical relationship was very high.

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