

Attitude Towards the Relevance of Sex Education in Schools among High School Teachers Special Reference at Nattika Gram Panchayat, Thrissur District

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Abstract

“Sex education is high quality teaching and learning about a broad variety of topics related to sex and sexuality. It explores values and beliefs about those topics and helps people gain the skills that are needed to navigate relationships with self, partners, and community, and manage one’s own sexual health. Sex education may take place in schools, at home, in community settings, or online.” Sex education is a broad program and set of guidelines that aims to educate people on topics surrounding human sexuality and help them develop knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and values related to their identities, relationships, and intimate connections. To navigate sexual relationships and manage sexual health, one needs sex education and awareness about sexuality. It involves a wide range of values and ideas about sex and relationships in addition to the biology of biological sex and reproduction, which is crucial for laying a solid basis for lifetime sexual health.

Keywords: sex-education, high school teachers, attitudes.

Introduction

The WHO states that sexuality, which includes sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy, and reproduction, is a fundamental component of being human throughout life. In thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviour, practices, and relationships, sexuality is experienced and expressed. All these aspects of sexuality are there, but not all of them are always felt or expressed. Biological, psychological, social, economic, political, ethical, legal, historical, religious, and spiritual elements combine to affect sexuality (WHO, 2006). Collins (2008) stated that sexuality education includes instruction on all facets of sexuality, including family planning, reproduction, body image, sexual orientation, sexual pleasure, values, decision-making, communication, dating, and methods for controlling STDs. Teenage pregnancy is becoming more and more common because of the following factors, which are thought to be its causes: adolescent curiosity about what sex is like; peer pressure and media influence. Its effects include school dropout, poor care for the child born to a teen mother; health issues; and other issues. Stella and Efimov (2019).

Importance of sex education

Sex education is a broad term that covers the teaching and learning about various aspects of sexuality, su-

ch as human development, relationships, personal skills, sexual behaviour, sexual health, society, and culture. It is important for young people to have access to accurate and comprehensive information and skills that can help them make informed and healthy decisions about their sexual and reproductive lives. Some of the goals of sex education are to:

- Build respect for oneself and other people.
- The development of communication and critical thinking abilities.
- Develop sexuality-positive attitudes and beliefs.
- Prevent sexual violence, STDs, and unplanned pregnancies.
- Support variety and equality among genders.
- Foster sexual behaviour that is safe and responsible.

Sex education is among the most controversial topics, with many disputes still taking place today. Furthermore, individuals are opposed to establishing sex education in schools because they believe it promotes students to engage in sexual behaviours. The realities, on the other hand, are quite different, as numerous studies have proven that sex education in schools would help pupils live healthier lives.

Importance of sex education in India

In India, sex education refers to the systematic distribution of information about sex, sexuality, and pregnancy by Indian governments and nonprofits. In India, there are three types of sex education: (1) Family planning for adults; (2) sex education classes for teenagers; and (3) HIV/AIDS Prevention Education. However, many Indians still view sex education as forbidden because they believe it to be a product of Western influence that has tainted Indian culture. Parents, schools, and health experts are also reluctant to talk about these topics with children. As a result, many teenagers and young adults lack the necessary information and safe practices regarding sexual health, putting them at risk for issues like STIs, unintended pregnancies, abortion, sexual abuse, and psychological issues.

The India's current programs

The Central Government has implemented several steps to manage the population and prevent HIV infection, including sex education and life skills programs.

- Planning Association of India (FPAI) was established in 1949 for the first time as a family organization to promote sexual awareness
- In 1969, the government began to develop population educational interventions and set up clinics to give family counselling.
- The National Population Education Program was launched later in 1980 to impart knowledge on the population dynamics in the family, community, country, and the world.
- Sonagachi, a small district in Kolkata, is well-known throughout Asia for its multi-story brothels and sex workers. To enable sex workers to speak out against sexual assault and spread awareness of the usage of condoms, the "Sonagachi Project" was established in West Bengal in 1992. Several NGOs and organizations, such as Talking About Reproductive and Sexual Health Issues (TARSHI), established in 1996, Nirantar Trust, Pratisandhi, Iesha Learning, etc., have established a safe environment for discussing issues related to adolescent education, consent, sexuality, and other topics.
- The National Council of Education introduced sex education as AEP (Adolescent Education Program) in the school curriculum in 2005 as part of Research and Training. It was extensively opposed not only by states such as Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, and Goa, but also by parents and schools.

By the end of 2007, it had been condemned, and numerous institutions had developed their own "sexual education curriculum."

- On September 25th, 2018, Ayushman Bharat stressed that teachers, health workers, parents, and communities are all working together to promote the overall health and well-being of pupils. The Government of India's Ministries of Health and Family Welfare and Human Resource Development issued sexual education rules in schools, which remain a contentious issue to this day.

Review of literature

Frontiers article [2022] state that teachers and their professional learning and development have been identified as playing an integral role in enabling children and young people right to comprehensive sexuality education. The provision of sexuality education during initial teacher education relation to the implementation and quickly of school-based sex education.

Ruth Vanita [2021] indicates that Same sex love in India: A literary history- In 2009, the Delhi High court's historic judgement overturning section 377 as a violation of the Indian constitution referred to same sex love in India. So did the 2018 supreme court decision which upheld that judgement. All the petitions against this anti- sodomy law have cited this landmark book to prove that homosexuality is not a western import. The same sex love in India is the book that brought to light the long, incontestable history of same sex love and desire in the Indian subcontinent.

Dr Ankit Chandra [2023] states that Complete sex education guide: Recommended by doctors- This book is helpful for teachers, parents, guardians, NGO workers, and health professionals, as well as high school and college students.

Emily Setty [2020] indicates risk and harm in youth sexting- This book draws upon interviews with teenage young people to explore their perspective on risk and harm in youth sexting culture. It focuses specifically on digital sexual image- sharing among young people. It contextualizes the findings in terms of wider literature on youth sexting and the broader theoretical and conceptual debates about the phenomena in public and academic spheres.

Tiffani Kocsis [2020] in his work critical analysis of sexuality education in the united state: towards inclusive: Towards an inclusive curriculum for social justice- A critical analysis of sexuality education explores the development of sexuality education in North America and uses economic, legal and psychological paradigms to identify and trace exclusionary programming and practices in schools. By analysing legal, political documents as well as state and private curricula.

Objectives

- To understand the factors of socio-cultural stigmas against sex education.
- To analyse the importance of sex education in high school curriculum.

Research design

Research design is the framework of research methods and techniques chosen by a researcher to conduct a study. This study was descriptive survey research, and the researcher used a quantitative methodology that included an interview schedule and a questionnaire. The researcher asked the respondents about their awareness, attitudes, and readiness for sex education. The study was entirely quantitative and descriptive. Even though there are many different types of research designs that are frequently used, the researcher frequently uses the quantitative study as having a favourable impact on the general view.

Identification of variables

A person, place, thing, or phenomenon that you are attempting to measure in some way is referred to in research as a variable. The independent and dependent variables are the two main variables in an experiment. This research employs both independent and dependent variables. This study identified independent variables such as age, education, religion, and marital status. And identified dependent variables include attitude, culture and socio-economic conditions.

Universe and sample

A population or universe is a clearly defined and identifiable group, and a sample is a predetermined subset of that population or universe. The universe of the study constitutes the high school teachers at Nattika Gram Panchayat in Thrissur district. And the samples were taken from 50 teachers representing a variety of schools, including public, private, aided, and unaided institutions. The stratified random sampling method was used to choose fifty (50) sample respondents.

Tools and methods of interpretation

Various tools are appropriate for acquiring different kinds of data. In this study data are collected through two sources primary and secondary sources. Primary data refers to the firsthand data that the researcher directly collected from sources. Secondary data is information gathered previously by someone else. The researcher uses primary data collection through questionnaire and interview schedule from the high school teachers at Nattika Gram Panchayat, Thrissur. secondary data were collected from, articles, books, journals and other internet sources related to sex education and attitude towards respondents.

Limitations of the study

- One of the main weaknesses of this study is the lack of a clear and consistent definition of what sexuality education is due to the employment of various concepts and methodologies in various situations and cultures.
- Another limitation is the limited access to data and responders since sex education is a touchy subject that could encounter social, moral, and legal obstacles.
- Primary data collection was based on convenient sampling, and because of that, the study targeted only Some of the total population.

Data analysis and interpretation

Data analysis and interpretation is considered as most important step in any research. The collected data from both quantitative and qualitative studies is presented, analysed, and described. To identify trends and relationships that are consistent with the goals of the research, the documentation and analysis process aimed to present the data in an understandable and interpretable form.

Table.1 SOCIO- CULTURAL STIGMAS AGAINST SEX EDUCATION

Sl.No	Statement	SA		A		N		D		SD		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	Participation in sex education training.	6	12%	37	74%	1	2%	6	12%	0	0%	50	100%

2.	Attend sex ed training is important	9	18%	16	32%	8	16%	17	34%	0	0%	50	100%
3.	Reluctance to discuss about sexual issues.	6	12%	20	40%	9	18%	15	30%	0	0%	50	100%
4.	Discussion about good touch and bad touch.	32	64%	11	22%	3	6%	4	8%	0	0%	50	100%
5.	Sexual discussion is a socio- cultural taboo.	4	8%	15	30%	16	32%	10	20%	5	10%	50	100%
6.	Open discussed about menstruation and its difficulties.	15	30%	5	10%	4	8%	20	40%	6	12%	50	100%
7.	Girls and boys should sit in distinct places.	1	2%	21	42%	16	32%	11	22%	1	2%	50	100%
8.	Sex ed start at home first.	15	30%	32	64%	3	6%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
9.	Social concern about the negative impact of sex education.	2	4%	14	28%	14	28%	19	38%	1	2%	50	100%
10.	Negative view on religion towards sex education	0	0%	13	26%	14	28%	22	44%	1	2%	50	100%
11.	Parents are not willing to give basic information about human body	5	10%	42	84%	2	4%	1	2%	0	0%	50	100%
12.	Generation gap is burden to provide sex education.	9	18%	32	64%	9	18%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
13.	perspective on the importance of motherhood.	19	38%	23	46%	7	14%	1	2%	0	0%	50	100%
14.	perspective on the importance of fatherhood.	18	36%	23	46%	7	14%	2	4%	0	0%	50	100%

15.	Discussion about society's issues, including sexual orientation.	1	2%	11	22%	15	30%	21	42%	2	4%	50	100%
16.	Sex ed should be a compulsory subject in schools.	2	4%	19	38%	29	58%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
17.	Sex education is a part of quality education.	4	8%	17	34%	26	52%	3	6%	0	0%	50	100%

*SA- Strongly agree, A-Agree, N-Neutral, D-Disagree, SD- Strongly disagree,
F- Frequency, P- percent

Table.1 contains a detailed analysis of attitudes of high- school teachers towards socio- cultural stigmas against sex education. Most of the respondents have participated in sex education training, but most of them do not see sex education as important to them. Most respondents have discussed bad touch and good touch, and it shows that respondents are aware of sexual abuse among children and its consequences. Comprehensive Sex Education as Violence Prevention: This article discusses how comprehensive sex education can help reduce sexual assault, physical dating violence, bullying and harassment, and suicide. The present study also addresses sexual abuse among children and how to avoid it through sex education. Most respondents agree that they are hesitant to teach sex education and that there is no open talk about menstruation and its challenges. Most respondents agree that boys and girls should sit separately, and they are concerned about the negative impact of sex education in society. And, according to many respondents, the generation gap is a hindrance to providing sexuality education. Most of the respondents have no discussion about social issues related to sexual abuse and sexual orientation. From this, we can understand that the social, cultural, and religious environment of the respondents influences their opinions. “Is Sexuality Education Against Indian Culture” This article examines typical objections to sexuality education in India and explains why they might not hold water in the social and cultural climate of the present. It also emphasizes the advantages of thorough sexuality education for kids and teenagers. This study and this article demonstrate a kind of cultural resistance to sexuality education in India. Most respondents discuss the value of motherhood and how the father is the centre of a family. Such opinions are also based on the social and cultural environment in which they are formed. These comments provide a clear understanding of the existing gender discrimination in society. Most of the respondents believed sex education should first start at home, and the basic knowledge about the human body is imparted to the children by the parents, but they are not interested in providing it. From this we can understand that none of the teachers show an open attitude towards sexuality education. More than half of the respondents have neutral opinion towards sex education should be compulsory subject in schools and it's a part of quality of education. Respondents are aware of the importance of sex education, while their socio-cultural background influences their opinion, which may result in a neutral opinion among respondents.

Table.2 Importance of sex education in school curriculum

Sl.No	Statement	SA		A		N		D		SD		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	Help the students to aware about human anatomy.	12	24%	26	52%	2	4%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
2.	Provide information about STDs.	10	20%	19	38%	14	28%	7	14%	0	0%	50	100%
3.	Reduce sexual abuse among children	5	10%	35	70%	10	20%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
4.	Children will feel good being male, female or transgender.	2	4%	29	58%	19	38%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
5.	Children will be able to accept and individual differences.	3	6%	26	52%	21	42%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
6.	Kids are more likely to open sexual abuse through sexed.	3	6%	36	72%	9	18%	2	4%	0	0%	50	100%
7.	Sex ed helps kids to shape them behaviour.	4	8%	24	48%	17	34%	5	10%	0	0%	50	100%
8.	Kids understand and accept physical and emotional changes	3	6%	39	78%	7	14%	0	0%	1	2%	50	100%
9.	Provide information about legal aspect of sexual abuse	12	24%	36	72%	2	4%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
10.	Children aware about gender orientation with the help of sex	2	4%	25	50%	19	38%	2	4%	0	0%	50	100%

	education.												
11.	Teaches responsible etiquette.	2	4%	24	48%	20	40%	4	8%	0	0%	50	100%
12.	Sex ed helps kids to know how to treat others.	3	6%	24	28%	21	42%	2	4%	0	0%	50	100%
13.	Sex ed reduce gender disparity	3	6%	20	40%	17	34%	10	20%	0	0%	50	100%

*SA- Strongly agree, A-Agree, N-Neutral, D-Disagree, SD- Strongly disagree,
F- Frequency, P- percent

Table.2 encompass a detailed analysis of the importance of sex education in the school curriculum. The respondents were aware of the significance of sex education in the school curriculum. Most respondents (52%) feel that sex education helps pupils learn about human anatomy and that they are willing to accept and appreciate individual diversity. Furthermore, respondents feel that sex education helps students minimize sexual abuse among children because they are more inclined to open about sexual abuse with the support of sex education.

Most respondents (38%) believe that sex education helps children become aware of sexually transmitted diseases and their consequences, as well as be able to accept physical and emotional changes during phases of development. Most of the respondents (72%) agree that sex education provide information about legal aspect of sexual abuses. From this, we can understand that most of the respondents are aware of the importance of sex education in the school curriculum. Furthermore, most respondents believe that sex education helps to shape the behaviour of children, which will help to avoid gender discrimination. When we analyse the table, we can understand that most of the respondents have positive attitude, and they are aware of the relevance of sex education in school curriculum.

Finding

Most respondents took part in sex education training at least once; however, most of them do not value sex education. Even though most respondents firmly agree that they have discussions about good and bad touch with their students and many of them do not believe that sex education is a sociocultural taboo, more than half of respondents are reluctant to address sexual problems with their pupils.

Most respondents, particularly male respondents, strongly disagree that they have no conversation with their students about menstruation and its difficulties since most teachers do not perceive menstruation as a normal phenomenon and consider as taboo. More than half of respondents argue that boys and girls should have separate place to sit. These types of opinions expressed by respondents are indicative of gender discrimination.

Most of them agree that sex education should first start at home, and parents are not willing to provide basic information about the human body to their children. It helps to understand that respondents, as

parents, are also not willing to provide basic information about the human body to their children. Most of respondents face difficulties to provide sex education to their students due to inter generation gap. Such thoughts and opinions of teachers are influenced by the social and cultural context in which they live. Most respondents do not discuss social concerns about the negative impact of sex education, negative views on religion, or social issues related to sexual orientation with their students. Major part of respondents agree that gender discrimination can avoid through the help of sex education.

Most of the respondents teach their students about the value of motherhood and how fathers become the centre of the family, which shows the influence of patriarchal culture. More than half of respondents have a neutral opinion towards the statement that sex education should be a compulsory subject in schools, while 4% strongly agree with this statement, and they are under the age of 30. and it shows the positive attitude of younger respondents.

The study shows that some of the respondents have a high attitude and some of them have a low attitude towards sex education. Most of them have a neutral opinion about this statement. Respondents do not consider sex education a sociocultural taboo, and they provide information about good and bad touch with their students, but they do not discuss much more about negative views on religion, menstruation, and social issues related to sexual abuse, sexual orientation, etc. The respondents have a reluctance to discuss sexual issues because of the intergenerational gap. All these things show that a sociocultural stigma is still present there.

The table.2 highlights the significance of sex education in the academic program. Most respondents are supportive of sex education and are aware of its significance. Students benefit from sexual education by learning about sexually transmitted diseases and human anatomy. By offering sex education, it also helps decrease the incidence of child sexual abuse and increases the likelihood that the kid will comprehend and accept physical and emotional changes.

Majority of respondents believe that children will feel good being male, female or transgender and will be able to accept and appreciate individual difference by getting sex education and this will help to avoid gender discrimination. Children are more likely to open about sexual abuse with the help of sex education, which can reduce sexual abuse among children.

Children can understand and accept physical and emotional change through sex education. Sex education provide information about legal aspect of sexual abuse. Children aware about gender orientation with the help of sex education. Most of the respondents have a positive attitude towards sex education, but the contradiction is that most respondents have a neutral stance on the idea of having sex education a compulsory subject in schools.

Suggestions

Age-appropriate sex education should be provided in schools. The school should take the lead in sex education.

- The administration should educate instructors on their responsibilities to children, society, and the nation.
- Sex education should be a compulsory subject in school curriculum. • It is necessary to give teachers specialized training in administering sex education classes.
- To provide training to teachers on how to impart sex education in an effective and sensitive manner and provide regular opportunities for their professional growth and development.

- When sex education is provided, boys and girls should sit together. • Teachers should build a high attitude towards sex education.
- To develop variety of methods such as group discussion and debates for enhancing knowledge of students.
- A proper orientation program should be organized for parents and students and teachers.
- The government should offer a range of resources to improve sex education in schools.
- Policymakers should establish and implement the features of an appropriate sex education program.
- Establish a moral approach to sex education. Emphasize teaching students how to care for and support one another. This reduces the possibility of them committing or being vulnerable to sexual violence.
- Implement evidence based as well as culturally responsive curricula that cover a wide range of topics related to human growth and development, interactions, personal abilities, sexual behaviour, sexual health, and society and culture.
- Respect all students' rights and needs, regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, and background, while providing a secure and welcoming educational setting for them.
- Examining the effects and results of sex education program on a regular basis and use feedback to improve them.

Conclusion

The researcher conducted a study among high school teachers at Nattika Gram Panchayath in Thrissur District. The main reason behind conducting a research study is to discover how high school teachers perceive the significance of sex education in the school curriculum. The main objectives of the study were to understand the socio

economic background of the respondents, the socio-cultural stigmas against sex education, and the importance of sex education in the school curriculum. The researcher selected samples by using the stratified random sampling method. Data collection is done through two types of data: secondary data and primary data. Primary data was collected through questionnaires and interviews, and secondary data was collected by using articles, books, and the internet. By analysing the data, the researcher was able to identify and understand the socio-economic background of respondents, socio-cultural stigmas against sex education, and the importance of sex education in school. And this helped in further study of the research.

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