



An enquiry to ascertain attitude of B.Ed. trainees towards sex education in view of inclusion and promotion of reproductive health education in school curriculum for a sustainable future

Paramita Mukherjee ¹, Dr. Minara Yeasmin ²

¹ Research scholar (Ph.D), Department of Education, Aliah University, Park Circus Campus, Kolkata, West Bengal, India

² Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Aliah University, Park Circus Campus, Kolkata, West Bengal, India

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Abstract

The present study aims to find out the attitude of trainee teachers towards sex education. The attitude of trainee teachers matters a lot because it is them who are future school teachers and are agents of imparting reproductive health related knowledge which is an important issue of population education in bringing positive change in the attitude towards and management of reproductive health of the students. Estimation of trainee teachers' understanding about sex education gives us idea of the need of inclusion of reproductive health education in teacher education curriculum and with that we are able to prepare a blue print of future road ahead to sensitize students at school level about management of reproductive health that is beneficial not only in maintaining wellbeing of reproductive health but attaining sustainable development goals ensuring gender equality, reducing inequalities and promoting peace and justice in society at large. 78 trainee teachers of semester III (2nd year) of B.Ed. course from Shri Shikshayatan College, Kolkata participated in a questionnaire survey regarding their attitude toward sex education in schools. Through analyzing their attitude, it has been tried to understand how perspectives of trainee teachers towards sex education irrespective of their subject of expertise are important to be effective and appropriate for the successful implementation of reproductive health education in schools.

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Introduction

It is the duty of the school to promote understanding of good health and wellbeing through quality education. Scientific knowledge about reproductive health helps bringing gender equality, reduce inequalities and thus can promote peace and justice in the society. It is the teachers who impart knowledge about reproductive health. So their understanding and perspective should be good enough to remove potential problems that arise due to poor understanding of reproductive health (Aransiola et.al.2013) ^[1]. Teacher Education courses must establish themselves as genuine platforms to promote good understanding of reproductive health so that the trainee teachers can act desirably when needed in professional fields (Toor, 2012) ^[14]. So inclusion of reproductive health education in curriculum in a way stimulates better understanding and safe experience of reproductive health not only during school life but throughout the life.

It is the teachers who shape the understanding of students to a large extent. They should be prepared, otherwise they cannot remove the darkness surrounding the topic of reproductive health (Kumar Bhasin and Aggarwal, 1999) ^[3]. Simultaneous inclusion of reproductive health education as a part of population education in teacher education curriculum and in school education curriculum (at secondary and higher secondary level) can certainly uphold agenda of sound reproductive health and wellbeing and contribute towards achievement of sustainable development goals through education.

Adolescent population includes the age group of 10 to 19 years; this phase is important as puberty is attained and it is marked by initiation of sexual activity (United Nations Population Fund, 2014) ^[12]. International Conference on Population Development (1994) puts stress on preventing poor reproductive outcomes among adolescents in developing countries. Lack of adequate knowledge and skill leads to unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion, sexually transmitted infection, maternal mortality, infant mortality and long term morbidity (National centre for diseases control, 2018) ^[8]. Reproductive health concerns are stigmatized in most of the underdeveloped countries like ours. Cultural and religious factors create inhibitive environment for discussion of reproductive health, gender norms create barriers to reproductive information and services and negative social consequences may lead to school dropout reducing employability with long term economic implications (Tripathi and Sekhe, 2013, UNFPA, 2016) ^[13, 19]. Even if uncomfortable we must acknowledge reproductive health needs of adolescents and respond to them responsibly (UNESCO, 2018) ^[18]. Proper management of reproductive health will help in realization of sustainable development goals.

Three aspects are dealt in addressing adolescent reproductive health related literature- (i) level of knowledge on reproductive health i.e. Awareness, (ii) Effects of reproductive health problems on educational achievement and (iii) teachers attitude towards teaching sex education i.e. Management. The present study tries to find out the attitude of trainee teachers towards sex education as they are the future medium of imparting knowledge in classroom about human sexuality and wellbeing of reproductive health.

Consequences of poor management of adolescent reproductive health on educational achievement of them demands great share of attention. Management of this issue with reproductive health literacy in preventing risk, dealing with related psychological stress and academic stress is essential and teachers play important role in this regard, so their attitude in teaching this topic is very important (Wight, 2008 and WHO, 2011, 2018) ^[15, 16]. The most important aspect found in the related literatures has been policy intervention (Latifnejad Roudsari et.al. 2013) ^[4]. Starting from framing curriculum for life skill education for the adolescents in expanding awareness and access to services have been are of grave concern so that reproductive rights of adolescents including the sexual minority adolescents also are taken care of (Gaughram and Asgary, 2014) ^[2]. Reproductive health management for adolescents by the teachers must focus on informing and preparing the adolescents and providing them care and support in management of their specific issues with dignity. Schools and its teachers need to be reproductive health responsive by breaking silene and stigma around the issue. Integration of reproductive concerns into national and state level policies make our society inclusive and help it proceed towards a sustainable future.

Objectives

- To find out the attitude of trainee teachers towards sex education
- To understand why inclusion of reproductive health education in teacher education curriculum is important
- To know why inclusion of reproductive health education in school education curriculum (upper primary,

secondary, higher secondary) is important

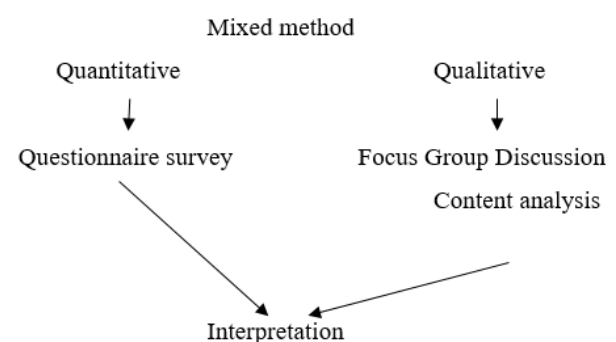
Hypothesis

- There exists no significant difference between trainee teachers belonging to different disciplines as per their pedagogy subjects regarding their attitude about sex education.
- There exists no significant difference between trainee teachers living in Kolkata and outside Kolkata.

Methods and procedures

- **Variables:** attitude towards sex education
- **Population:** B.Ed. students
- **Sample:** 78 trainee teachers of 3rd semester (2nd year) of B.Ed. department, Shri Shikshayatan College, Kolkata
- **Tools:** Attitude Scale towards Sex Education developed by Dr. Usha Mishra.

Design



Result and Discussion

Background of the respondents - The total number of participants in this survey is 78%, all of them are B.Ed. students of 3rd semester in Shri Shikshayatan College, Kolkata. 47.4% from the group of would be teachers in the sample are pursuing the course to become language teachers, their pedagogy subjects are either Bengali or English or Hindi. 44.9% are trainee teachers in social science, either History or Geography are their pedagogy subjects and 7.7% are would be teachers in Mathematics. The respondents mostly live in Kolkata, only 17.9% are from outside Kolkata who either commute or stay in the city for educational purpose.

Necessity of sex education - Almost all the participants are of the opinion that sex education helps students to understand sex related problems. Nearly 64% of them feel that scientific knowledge about sex related issues can be obtained only through sex education. 72% wishes sex education become essential part of curriculum in Indian education system as 59% thinks sex education is indispensable in education programme considering the present time. 64% responded that sex education cannot be a hindrance in the development of co-education rather they believe students become responsible citizens through sex education.

As much as 69% of the participants in the survey say sex education should be included in the curriculum, not as a separate subject but in the curriculum of various subjects. In the opinion of 70% of the trainee teachers' sex education should rather be introduced as a separate subject at higher studies.

Mix responses have been recorded regarding whether life

skill education is more useful than sex education.

68% of the trainee teachers expressed the view that inclusion of sex education in curriculum would not increase the learning burden of the students and 81% confidently said that sex education cannot lessen the interest of students towards studies.

Importance of teachers, parents and peers in learning about sex education - 60% says teachers need proper training to be able to impart knowledge about human sexuality in class as they are the best medium of transaction of any form of knowledge, 91% says that parents also should volunteer in educating children on reproductive health. The role of peers also cannot be underestimated. 82% of the respondents believe that students become aware about reproductive health when they interact with peers.

Role of sex education in population control - 74.4% replied that sex education can be helpful in controlling unlimited growth of population in a country like India, as 73% thinks the subject matter of sex education is much related to family planning. 86% opined that sex education can potentially arrest population from growing. On the other hand as from instances it is evident that introduction of sex education in school curriculum does not really influence increase sex related crimes, almost everyone in the group accepted the fact that sex education can control sex related crimes. 90% believe that sex education would play vital role in creating better social order as 91% of the respondents find sex education necessary for eradicating social evils.

Importance of sex education in India - As much as 97% are of the opinion that sex education would be helpful for adolescents in protecting themselves from sexual exploitation and strikes out the thought that sex education can increase sexual exploitation. They think that sex education would rather help in eradicating sexual complexities, prejudices and doubts. In their thought process 86% of the participants do not see ethos of sex education against Indian culture, 76% find there is high need in the country for inclusion of sex

education, and 58% supported the idea of introducing sex education from primary level in line of interest of the country. 75% estimate that provision of sex education in formal education is a challenging work before the nation.

Table 1: For F-test

Variables	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	df	F	Remarks
Social science	35	130.08	10.81	75	1.612	Significant at 0.05 level
Language	37	125.86	10.48			
Mathematics	6	130.83	11.05			
Total	78	128.14	10.76			

Through statistical analysis of the data collected by standardized tool it is found that there remains significant difference between trainee teachers of different disciplines regarding their attitude towards sex education (hypothesis 1 is thus redetected).

Table 2: For t-test

Variables	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	df	t	Remarks
Kolkata	64	127.84	10.27	76	-0.519	Not significant at 0.05 level
Outside Kolkata	14	129.50	13.10			

In the other analysis it is found that there remains no significant difference regarding their attitude towards sex education between trainee teachers from Kolkata and trainee teachers from outside the city.

The data gathered from focus group discussion with selected B.Ed. trainees from the sample, shows how and in what line such would be teachers think that scientific knowledge of human sexuality as an essential part of curriculum can be instrumental in developing knowledge, attitude and skill in school students in the context of our culture.

Table 3: Categories Explained

Codes	Knowledge	Attitude	Skill
Scientific knowledge about human sexuality	Eradicate prejudice and doubts	Control unlimited growth of population	Protection from sexual exploitation
Sex education as an essential part of curriculum	Would not increase learning burden Would not lessen interest Would not create emotional problem	Interaction with parents and peers (promote knowledge gain)	Control sexual diseases Control sex related crimes
Sex education in Indian culture	There remains high need But challenging to implement	Is not against ethos of Indian culture	Helpful in creating better and just social order

Conclusion

Content related to reproductive health and sex education should be included in teacher training courses so that trainees become aware of importance of sex education of school students specially the adolescents. Adolescents undergo several transitions in their body and mind which may create emotional turbulence in their lives and affect their educational achievements (National Education Policy, 2020) [9]. Such situations need attention by teachers. Well trained teachers in this regard can take care of the situation and scientifically help students cope with their problems (Oakley et.al, 1995) [11]. Sex education in teacher training courses both pre service and in-service develop positive attitude of teachers towards teaching contents related to human sexuality. Thus presence of sex education as a topic in teacher training courses paves way for introduction of sex education

in school curriculum which further influences better management of reproductive health of the students (Nakpodia, 2012) [6] and thus India will be able to solve several issues related to its high population growth.

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