



Student’s Knowledge and Perception towards Sex Education: An Initial Report on the Development of Reproductive Health Education Teaching Plan

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Abstract		Original Research Article
<p>This study explored students’ knowledge and perceptions of sex education at Rizal National High School. Employing a descriptive-quantitative approach, data were gathered from 60 students across Grades 7 to 12. The findings revealed an average level of knowledge on sex education but significant gaps in family-based discussions and access to contraceptive knowledge. While students recognized the importance of sex education in informed decision-making, cultural norms, stigma, and inadequate teacher training limited its effectiveness. Notably, the study highlighted the need for a culturally tailored teaching plan grounded in Constructivist and Social Learning Theories. The proposed teaching plan integrates participatory methods and multimedia tools to foster inclusivity and reduce stigma. Recommendations include parental workshops, professional training for educators, and partnerships with health professionals to enhance delivery. This study underscores the importance of comprehensive reproductive health education in addressing teenage pregnancies and improving sexual health outcomes.</p> <p>Keywords: Contraceptive, Knowledge, Perception, Teenage Pregnancy, Teaching Models</p>		

INTRODUCTION

Sex education refers to the structured program of learning that equips individuals with knowledge, attitudes, skills, and values necessary to understand and make informed decisions about their sexual health. It provides essential information about topics such as puberty, sexual orientation, relationships, and sexual rights, empowering individuals to lead healthy and responsible lives. Comprehensive sex education aims to go beyond abstinence-only approaches, offering medically accurate and age-appropriate information that addresses both the physical and emotional aspects of sexuality.

Teaching sex education emphasizes the delivery of age-appropriate and culturally sensitive content to students, fostering awareness about physical development, emotional relationships, consent, and preventive measures (Leung et al., 2019). It involves engaging students in meaningful discussions, addressing their questions, and dispelling myths surrounding sexual health. Effective teaching methods incorporate interactive activities, multimedia resources, and real-life scenarios to ensure students gain practical knowledge and skills for managing their sexual and reproductive health responsibly (Millanzi et al., 2022).

Reproductive health education, a broader aspect of sex education, focuses on promoting a comprehensive understanding of human reproductive systems, contraceptive methods, and practices to ensure sexual and reproductive well-being (Mohammed & Haque, 2024). It also encompasses discussions about family planning, maternal health, and the prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Reproductive health education plays a crucial role in empowering individuals to make informed decisions about their reproductive health, fostering healthier communities and reducing societal issues such as teenage pregnancies and STIs (Sulastri & Nuryahati, 2023).

Globally, sex education faces significant challenges due to cultural stigmas, religious opposition, and varying standards of curriculum implementation (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, 2021). In many countries, discussions about sexuality are considered taboo, resulting in misinformation and inadequate preparation for adolescents to navigate sexual health responsibly. The lack of trained educators further exacerbates the issue, leading to inconsistent delivery of sex education programs (Charvula et al., 2022).

In the Philippines, the implementation of the Reproductive Health (RH) Law mandates the inclusion of sex education in schools (Vanesa et al., 2022). However, resistance from conservative groups, parents, and educators hinders its effective execution. Limited resources, lack of teacher training, and gaps in the curriculum also contribute to the inadequate delivery of reproductive health education (Walker et al., 2020). Consequently, Filipino youth face high rates of teenage pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and limited awareness of contraceptive methods.

The CARAGA region mirrors the national challenges with additional localized barriers such as poverty, cultural norms, and limited access to health services. Educators often struggle to address reproductive health topics effectively due to inadequate training and a lack of culturally tailored teaching materials (Golfarb & Liberman, 2021). These challenges result in students having varying levels of understanding and misconceptions about sex education.

Furthermore, this study wanted to emphasize the different learning theories and teaching models to

teach reproductive health education specifically sex education. Example of such theory that is grounded in Constructivist Learning Theory, which posits that learners construct knowledge through their experiences and interactions with their environment. In the context of teaching reproductive health education, the constructivist approach highlights the importance of engaging students in meaningful discussions, providing real-life scenarios, and encouraging critical thinking (Le & Nguyen, 2024). By facilitating active participation, educators can address misconceptions and foster a deeper understanding of sexual and reproductive health topics.

Another is the learning theory in teaching is about Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura, emphasizing that learning occurs through observation, imitation, and modeling. In the context of teaching reproductive health education, the theory highlights the importance of role models, culturally sensitive instructional strategies, and interactive learning environments (Chuang, 2021). Social Learning Theory also underscores the role of self-efficacy and motivation in adopting positive reproductive health practices, making it a fitting framework for addressing students' perceptions and developing an effective teaching model.

While sex education is integrated into many educational systems, there remains a significant lack of comprehensive teaching models that cater to the specific needs of reproductive health education (Zulu et al., 2019). In the Philippines, particularly in the CARAGA region, existing curricula fail to address cultural and contextual nuances. In Surigao City, understanding sex is essential for promoting informed decision-making, healthy relationships, and overall well-being among the youth. By integrating accurate, age-appropriate information into the curriculum, students can gain a better understanding of their bodies, consent, and safe practices. This helps in reducing misconceptions, preventing early pregnancies, and addressing sexually transmitted infections, ultimately fostering a healthier, more informed community. Thus, this gap underscores the need for a specialized teaching model that bridges these deficiencies and effectively delivers reproductive health education to students.

Hence, the research study aims to: (1) examine students' perceptions of sex education,

particularly their knowledge of sexual health and contraceptives and (2) to give ideas on the development and implementation of a teaching model tailored to effectively deliver reproductive health education based on the result of the current study.

This current study contributes to the field of education by providing insights into students' perceptions of sex education, which can inform the development of culturally relevant teaching strategies. The proposed teaching model aims to empower educators to deliver effective reproductive health education, ultimately reducing teenage pregnancies and improving sexual health outcomes

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive-quantitative research design to analyze and assess the knowledge and awareness of students about sex education. This design enabled the researchers to measure and describe the extent of knowledge and awareness among the target participants. Junior and senior high school students were selected to provide diverse insights based on their academic tracks and grade levels. Specifically, the study focused on students from Grades 7 to 12, covering those in the General Academic Strand (GAS) and the Technical Vocational and Livelihood Track (TVL). The descriptive nature of the research facilitated the identification of patterns and perceptions without influencing participants' responses.

Sampling Design

The study utilized random sampling to ensure fairness and unbiased selection of participants from the target population. A total of 60 students were chosen, comprising 40 junior high school students (Grades 7 to 10) and 20 senior high school students (Grades 11 to 12). The sample included representatives from the General Academic Strand and TVL strands, ensuring diversity in academic and technical orientations. Random sampling minimize selection bias, making the findings more generalizable within the selected school. The researchers adhered to ethical guidelines by securing informed consent from all participants prior to data collection.

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument was adopted from Justice Agyie Ampofo's (2016) study, "Research On Students' Perception Towards Sex Education: A Case Study Of Adansi Atobiase D/A Junior High School In The Adansi South District Of The Ashanti Region Of Ghana" to suit the local context of the current study. The questionnaire included both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions to measure various dimensions of knowledge and awareness. The instrument was divided into two parts: Part I collected demographic information, while Part II evaluated knowledge and perception levels. Permission was secured from the principal of Rizal National High School before data gathering. The survey ensured participant anonymity, in compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, by making names optional and storing responses securely.

Statistical Treatment

Descriptive statistics were applied to summarize and interpret the data effectively. Frequency counts, percentages, and means were calculated to analyze participants' responses. A five-point Likert scale was employed, assigning values ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to quantify the levels of agreement. Each response was given value: strongly agree = 5, agree = 4, neutral = 3, disagree = 2, and strongly disagree = 1. Means of responses were used to interpret results and were given verbal interpretation. Means ranging from 1.00-1.80 were interpreted as "strongly Disagree or Very Low", 1.81-2.60 were "Disagree or Low", 2.61-3.40 "Neutral or Average", 3.41-4.20 "Agree or High", and 4.21-5.00 "Strongly Agree or Very High". This approach allowed the researchers to draw meaningful conclusions regarding students' knowledge and perceptions about sex education.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the study to protect the rights and well-being of participants. Participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from both the students and, if necessary, their guardians. The researchers emphasized the confidentiality of responses, ensuring that only authorized individuals had access to the collected data. Anonymity was maintained by allowing participants to omit their

names in the survey forms. The study strictly adhered to the Data Privacy Act of 2012, safeguarding personal information and maintaining participants' trust. Prior approval from the school principal ensured compliance with institutional policies on research involving students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study assessed the knowledge and

perception of students towards sex education at Rizal National High School. A total of 60 participants evenly distributed across Grades 7 to 12 participated in the research, providing insights into the knowledge and perception of sex education.

Table 1 provides a detailed overview of the participants' profiles, including their age, sex, grade level, and previous GPA.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage of Age, Sex, and Grade Level of the participants.
(Participant's Profile)

PROFILE	F	%
Age		
10-15	36	60
16-21	24	40
22-27	0	0
TOTAL	60	100
Sex		
Male	16	26.67
Female	44	73.33
TOTAL	60	100
Grade Level		
7	10	16.65
8	10	16.65
9	10	16.65
10	10	16.65
11	10	16.65
12	10	16.65
TOTAL	60	100
Previous GPA		
95-100	0	0
90-94	25	41.67
85-89	21	35
80-84	10	16.67
75-79	3	5
75 below	1	1.66
TOTAL	60	100

Table 1 revealed that 60% of participants were aged 10–15 years, while 40% were 16–21 years. The gender distribution showed 73.33% females and 26.67% males, reflecting a gender

imbalance in the sample. Equal representation from each grade level (16.65%) ensured a balanced perspective but randomly selected participants. Most participants had a general weighted average of 90–

94, suggesting a predominantly high-performing academic group.

Table 2 presents the perception and knowledge of participants regarding sex education, summarizing responses to nine key statements. This

includes their views on the emphasis placed on sex education in schools, their satisfaction with its content, and their acknowledgment of its importance in making informed decisions.

Table 2. The perception and knowledge about sex education.

Statements	Mean	Verbal Description	Verbal Interpretation
1. Sex education is not given enough emphasis in school	2.65	Neutral	Average
2. Are you always satisfied with the sex education given?	3.13	Neutral	Average
3. Have you learnt more about sex education	3.10	Neutral	Average
4. Have you ever discussed sex with your parents, brothers/sisters?	2.35	Disagree	Low
5. Sex education is an important aspect of one's life	3.43	Agree	High
6. Sex education is not a waste of time	3.13	Neutral	Average
7. Sex education is overemphasized in the community	2.62	Neutral	Average
8. Parents should NOT be involved in sexuality education	2.47	Disagree	Low
9. Sex education helps students make informed decisions about sexual behavior	3.48	Agree	High
Overall Weighted Mean	2.93	Neutral	Average

<i>Mean Value</i>	<i>Legend: Verbal Description</i>	<i>Verbal Interpretation</i>
<i>1.00-1.80</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Very low</i>
<i>1.81-2.60</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Low</i>
<i>2.61-3.40</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Average</i>
<i>3.41-4.20</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>4.21-5.00</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very high</i>

Table 2 illustrated that participants generally held neutral or average level of attitudes towards sex education, with an overall mean score of 2.93. The highest-rated statement was "Sex education helps students make informed decisions about sexual behavior" (mean = 3.48, Agree/High), indicating a

recognition of its importance.

Conversely, the lowest-rated statement, "Have you ever discussed sex with your parents, brothers/sisters" (mean = 2.35, Disagree), highlighted a lack of family-based discussions. These findings suggest that while students see the

value in sex education, societal and familial barriers hinder open communication (Rehman, 2019). Embedding reproductive health topics within existing subjects like Science or Health ensures seamless integration into the curriculum (Potvain 2024). Moreover, the use of age-appropriate modules addressing puberty, relationships, consent, contraceptive methods, and decision-making skills can improve students understanding on sex education (Gray, 2022).

On the part of the teacher, using participatory methods and multimedia tools like role-playing, videos, and gamified content to engage students and reduce stigma on topics about sexuality (Franco et al., 2022). Also, teachers should ensure that the teaching model respects local cultural and religious contexts while promoting inclusivity and diversity. In addition, offering specialized training and support networks to help educators confidently deliver sensitive topics and share best practices. The Department of Education (DepEd) Memorandum No. 001 series of 2024 which is the “Implementation of Catch-Up Fridays” highlighted the importance of reinforcing the learnings of the students on Values Education which also include Health education. But it is crucial to prioritize a robust professional

development framework for educators implementing "Catch-Up Fridays" (Requillo et al., 2024)

Furthermore, the results highlight significant gaps in knowledge and awareness, despite participants' moderate support for sex education's role in informed decision-making. Cultural norms, religious beliefs, and inadequate access to inclusive sex education are likely to have an impact on the uncertainty in perspectives shown in neutral responses (Lameiras-Fernández et al., 2021). The absence of open family discussions underscores the need for parental involvement in sexuality education, bridging gaps between school-based programs and home environments. Hence, there should be a workshop for parents to foster understanding and acceptance of reproductive health education. This will allow the parents to engage in a proper discussion and guide their children on sex education topics (Evans et al., 2019).

Table 3 presents the knowledge of students regarding contraceptives, showing their responses to various statements. This includes knowing about the responsibility for using contraceptives (whether it's the boys, girls, or both), understanding how contraceptives work, knowing where to access them, and having opinions or attitudes about the topic.

Table 3. Knowledge of students on contraceptives

Statements	Mean	Verbal Description	Verbal Interpretation
1. Boys are responsible for using contraception	3.70	Agree	High
2. Girls are responsible for using contraception	3.45	Agree	High
3. Both boys and girls are responsible for using contraception	3.43	Agree	High
4. Is good for student carrying condoms	4.80	Strongly Agree	Very high
5. Having sex as student brings about crisis pregnancies	3.25	Neutral	Average
6. Do you think that you have enough knowledge about contraceptives	3.07	Neutral	Average
7. It is easy to get contraceptives?	2.80	Neutral	Average
8. You feel happy when going to a doctor, nurse, or pharmacy for contraceptives?	2.77	Neutral	Average
9. You know how contraceptives work	2.95	Neutral	Average
10. You know of condom	3.89	Agree	Average

11. You worry about getting pregnant/impregnating somebody	3.72	Agree	High
12. Your parents will be happy when you impregnate a girl	2.07	Disagree	Low
13. Is not good to have sex as a student.	3.25	Neutral	Average
Overall Weighted Mean	3.32	Neutral	Average

<i>Mean Value</i>	<i>Verbal Description</i>	<i>Verbal Interpretation</i>
1.00-1.80	Strongly disagree	Very low
1.81-2.60	Disagree	Low
2.61-3.40	Neutral	Average
3.41-4.20	Agree	High
4.21-5.00	Strongly Agree	Very high

Table 3 analyzed participants' understanding of contraceptives, yielding an overall neutral mean of 3.32. The highest-rated statement, “It is good for students carrying condoms” (mean = 4.80, Strongly Agree/Very high), demonstrated progressive attitudes towards safe practices. However, low ratings for statements like “It is easy to get contraceptives” (mean = 2.80) and “You feel happy when going to a doctor, nurse, or pharmacy for contraceptives” (mean = 2.77, Average) indicated hesitancy and challenges in accessing contraceptive resources. The lowest-rated item, “Your parents will be happy when you impregnate a girl” (mean = 2.07, Disagree/Low), reinforced societal disapproval of early pregnancies.

Results revealed a discrepancy in contraceptive knowledge and accessibility. While students acknowledge the importance of safe practices, their hesitancy to seek professional advice indicates stigma and inadequate support systems. These challenges align with broader societal issues in the Philippines, where sex education remains a taboo topic, limiting its effectiveness (Puen, 2024). Hence, there should be a linkages and partners with community health professionals to the schools to provide expert guidance and resources. Moreover, there should be a regularly gathering of feedback from students, parents, and teachers to refine content and delivery methods on reproductive health education (Adekola & Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2022).

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study emphasize the urgent need to strengthen sex education in schools.

Students demonstrated an average level of knowledge of reproductive health topics but lacked access to in-depth knowledge and support, particularly regarding contraceptives. The absence of open discussions with family members further hindered the effectiveness of existing educational efforts. Cultural and societal barriers, coupled with inadequate teacher training, perpetuate misconceptions and stigma surrounding sexual health.

This study underscores the importance of incorporating culturally sensitive and inclusive teaching methods to improve students' understanding of reproductive health. Grounding the teaching model in Constructivist and Social Learning Theories allows educators to engage students effectively through participatory and multimedia approaches. Additionally, fostering collaborations with health professionals and engaging parents in workshops can bridge gaps between school-based programs and home environments. Addressing these challenges through comprehensive strategies can reduce teenage pregnancies, improve health outcomes, and empower Filipino youth with informed decision-making skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the identified gaps and challenges in delivering effective sex education, it is essential to implement targeted strategies that enhance both the content and delivery of reproductive health education. The following are the recommendations of the current study:

- Development of a Specialized Teaching Model: Design a culturally sensitive teaching model integrating Constructivist and Social Learning Theories.
- Teacher Training: Conduct professional development programs to equip educators with the knowledge and skills to deliver reproductive health education effectively.
- Parental Engagement: Organize workshops for parents to promote open discussions and reduce stigma around sex education.
- Partnerships with Health Professionals: Establish collaborations with community

health workers to provide expert guidance on reproductive health topics.

- Feedback Mechanisms: Implement regular evaluations and researches involving students, parents, and educators to refine teaching methods and address gaps.

The said recommendations aim to promote comprehensive, culturally sensitive, and inclusive teaching approaches while fostering collaboration among educators, parents, and health professionals. These strategies will empower students with the knowledge and skills necessary to make informed decisions, ultimately improving sexual and reproductive health outcomes.

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