**Original Research Article**

**THE PROS AND CONS OF OFFERING SEX EDUCATION IN THE PHILIPPINE BASIC EDUCATION CURRICULA**

**ABSTRACT**

This study explores the advantages and disadvantages of integrating sex education into the basic education curricula in the Philippines. As discussions surrounding adolescent reproductive health, teenage pregnancy, and sexual abuse become increasingly relevant, the inclusion of comprehensive sex education in schools remains a highly debated topic among educators, parents, policymakers, and religious groups. Through a review of literature, qualitative interviews with teachers and students, and analysis of existing education policies, this research identifies key benefits such as increased awareness on reproductive health, reduced rates of teenage pregnancy, prevention of sexually transmitted infections, and the promotion of responsible decision-making among youth. Conversely, it also examines the challenges, including cultural and religious resistance, lack of teacher preparedness, inconsistent implementation, and fears of early sexual initiation. The findings highlight the need for a culturally sensitive yet science-based approach to sex education that balances moral values with public health priorities. This study ultimately aims to inform education policy and promote open, fact-based dialogue on the role of sex education in shaping a healthier and more informed generation of Filipinos.

**Keywords:** *sex education, teenage pregnancy, reproductive health, Philippine education, teacher perspectives, comprehensive sexuality education, cultural resistance*

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**INTRODUCTION**

Sex education continues to be one of the most debated topics in the Philippine education system. In recent years, growing concerns about the rise in teenage pregnancies, the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and increasing reports of sexual abuse among minors have prompted calls for a more comprehensive and formalized approach to sex education in schools (POPCOM, 2020). According to the Commission on Population and Development, the number of teenage pregnancies in the country has alarmingly increased, with many young girls dropping out of school due to early parenthood. This growing public health issue reflects a lack of access to correct and timely information about sexual and reproductive health among Filipino youth.

In a predominantly Catholic country like the Philippines, discussions around sex are often met with discomfort, if not outright resistance. Cultural norms and religious beliefs play a significant role in shaping attitudes toward sex education, leading many families and communities to avoid the subject altogether (Lopez, 2021). As a result, many young Filipinos grow up with misconceptions and myths about sexuality, reproduction, and relationships—often relying on peers, the internet, or media as their primary sources of information, which are not always accurate or healthy (UNESCO, 2018).

The Department of Education (DepEd) recognized this issue and, in 2018, released DepEd Order No. 31, which provides policy guidelines on the implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in basic education (DepEd, 2018). This policy aimed to integrate sexuality education into key learning areas, including Science, Health, Araling Panlipunan, and Values Education. The goal was to provide students with factual, age-appropriate, and culturally sensitive information that could help them develop responsible attitudes and behavior toward sexuality, gender identity, and reproductive health. Despite this progressive move, implementation across schools remains inconsistent due to lack of training, limited resources, and community opposition (David et al., 2017).

Supporters of sex education argue that it empowers students with essential life skills—such as critical thinking, decision-making, and assertiveness—enabling them to avoid risky behaviors and protect themselves from unwanted consequences (Darroch et al., 2016). Studies have shown that young people who receive proper sexuality education are more likely to delay sexual activity, use protection, and engage in healthier relationships (WHO, 2011). Sex education also provides a safe space for students to ask questions and express concerns that they may not feel comfortable discussing at home.

However, critics of sex education in schools argue that exposing young children to these topics may encourage early sexual experimentation and promote immorality (Lopez, 2021). Some believe that sex education undermines the values taught at home and contradicts religious teachings. There are also fears that teachers may not be adequately trained to handle such sensitive topics, potentially leading to misinformation or discomfort in the classroom.

Given these contrasting perspectives, it is crucial to assess the real benefits and drawbacks of implementing sex education within the Philippine basic education system. This research aims to provide a balanced view of the pros and cons by examining educational policies, public opinions, and actual outcomes in schools where CSE is implemented. Through a combination of literature review, stakeholder interviews, and policy analysis, this study hopes to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on how best to equip the Filipino youth with the knowledge and values they need to navigate in today’s complex social realities (UNESCO, 2018; WHO, 2011).

Despite the implementation of DepEd’s Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) policy, sex education in the Philippine basic education system remains inconsistent and controversial. On one hand, there is growing evidence that comprehensive sex education can reduce teenage pregnancy, promote healthy relationships, and improve reproductive health outcomes among youth. On the other hand, significant opposition from conservative communities, religious institutions, and some parents has made the implementation challenging. Moreover, lack of standardized materials, proper teacher training, and community support has led to varying results across schools.

This study aims to address the main question under investigation:

1. What are the perceived advantages and disadvantages of integrating sex education into the Philippine basic education curricula?

To better understand the issue, the study will also answer the following specific questions:

1. What is the relevance of including sex education in the basic education curricula for Filipino students?
2. What are the challenges faced by educators in teaching sex education in Filipino schools?
3. What are the long-term societal benefits of incorporating sex education into the Filipino basic education system?
4. How does sex education contribute to the prevention of teenage pregnancy in the Philippines?

**METHODOLOGY**

This study used a descriptive research design to explore the advantages and disadvantages of integrating sex education into the Philippine basic education curriculum. The qualitative approach was chosen to gain deeper insights into the lived experiences, perceptions, and opinions of key stakeholders, specifically teachers. The descriptive method allowed the researcher to provide a detailed picture of the implementation of sex education, including its strengths and limitations in actual school settings.

The participants of the study included public high school teachers who were involved in teaching subjects that integrated sex education (e.g., Araling Panlipunan and Personal Development). A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who had direct experience or knowledge related to sex education in schools. Approximately seven teachers were selected from Solsona National High School to provide varied perspectives.

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with teachers to explore their views, experiences, and concerns related to sex education in schools. All interviews were conducted in a safe and respectful manner, with full consent from the participants. Discussions were held in English and Filipino. The data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis. Responses were transcribed, coded, and grouped into themes that reflected recurring ideas or significant differences in perspectives. Emerging themes included topics such as “perceived benefits,” “cultural resistance,” “teacher preparedness,” and “student impact.”

Prior to data collection, participants were asked to sign informed consent forms. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained throughout the research process. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the key findings from interviews conducted with public school teachers regarding the inclusion of sex education in the Philippine basic education curriculum. The insights gathered have been categorized into four main themes aligned with the research questions: (1) Relevance of sex education, (2) Challenges in teaching it, (3) Long-term societal benefits, and (4) Its role in preventing teenage pregnancy.

**Relevance of Sex Education According to Teachers.** Teachers widely agreed that integrating sex education into the curriculum is both necessary and timely. As Darroch (2016) and UNESCO (2018) emphasize, comprehensive sexuality education empowers students with accurate information that fosters healthy development and informed choices. Lopez (2021) further highlights that while parents and teachers recognize its importance, sociocultural discomfort often hinders its full implementation.

Furthermore, sex education teaches young people how to communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, and recognize and prevent abuse, fostering positive social interactions. One teacher in Personal Development, Teacher A, stated during the interview that:

You can often sense when students are curious about topics related to their bodies, relationships, and sexuality, yet hesitate to voice their questions out of fear, shame, or embarrassment. This silence is especially common in cultures like the Philippines, where open discussions about sex are often considered taboo within families and communities. Comprehensive sex education creates a structured, respectful, and judgment-free environment where students feel safe to explore and understand these important topics. Instead of relying on unreliable sources like rumors or social media, students are provided with scientifically accurate information. This not only addresses their curiosity but also empowers them to make informed, responsible decisions about their health and relationships."

Teachers also noted that many students encounter puberty-related changes without guidance from parents. Including sex education in the curriculum allows the school to fill in this gap, making students feel less anxious or confused about their development.

**Challenges Faced by Teachers in Teaching Sex Education.** Despite recognizing its importance, many educators continue to face obstacles such as resistance from parents and lack of training (David et al., 2017; Search, 2023). These challenges echo historical findings by Frilles (1973), who observed that even decades ago, teachers lacked formal training and community support in delivering sex education. Another teacher in Personal Development, Teacher B, thus shared:

As educators, we sometimes receive complaints from parents even when we only touch on the basics of reproductive health. This response reflects the lingering stigma surrounding the topic of sex education, particularly in a society like ours where discussions on reproductive health are often viewed as uncomfortable or inappropriate. Many parents still see sex education as something that should be exclusively taught at home, or worse, avoided altogether. Despite the fact that we're only introducing fundamental concepts about human biology and health, the mere mention of topics such as contraception, menstruation, or sexual relationships can trigger discomfort or resistance. This resistance is rooted in deep-seated cultural and religious beliefs that associate sex education with promiscuity, rather than with the promotion of healthy, informed choices. This stigma creates a barrier to effective teaching, leaving educators in a difficult position of balancing curriculum requirements with parental concerns.

Another common issue is lack of proper training and support. Many teachers admitted that they did not receive formal instruction on how to teach sex education, leaving them feeling unsure or uncomfortable when discussing certain topics. Some also mentioned the absence of updated, contextualized, or engaging learning materials tailored to the Filipino classroom. Scheduling and prioritization also pose problems. Teachers shared that with already packed lesson plans, sex education often gets sidelined or rushed.

**Perceived Long-Term Benefits of Sex Education.** Teachers identified long-term societal benefits such as reduced teenage pregnancies and the promotion of responsible behaviors—supported by WHO (2011) and UNESCO & UNFPA (2014), who found that CSE positively affects youth decision-making and public health. Darroch (2016) also highlight how these programs contribute to long-term improvements in reproductive health and gender equity. Teacher C explained this further, thus:

This isn’t just about sex—it’s about respect, self-control, and life planning. It’s about teaching students how to value themselves and others, how to recognize their boundaries, and how to honor the choices of those around them. It’s about learning when to pause, when to walk away, and when to speak up. It’s about giving young people the mindset to think beyond the moment—to weigh their actions, to picture their future, and to act in ways that protect it. It’s about forming healthy relationships, making thoughtful decisions, and growing into adults who are not only informed—but grounded, respectful, and responsible. It's about laying the groundwork for a life lived with purpose.

Teachers also noted that sex education encourages discussions around gender, identity, and mutual respect—topics that are increasingly relevant in today’s generation. They believe that fostering open and respectful dialogue at school can lead to more informed and tolerant individuals in the future.

**Teachers’ Perspectives on Teenage Pregnancy Prevention.** All teachers interviewed agreed that sex education contributes directly to the prevention of teenage pregnancy, a finding supported by recent reports from POPCOM (2020), Oxfam Philippines (2022), and the Philippine News Agency (2019), which identify access to information and early intervention as crucial strategies for reducing early pregnancies.

Teachers generally recognize the significant impact of teenage pregnancy on students' lives, viewing it as a multifaceted issue with various contributing factors. They emphasize the importance of comprehensive sex education, supportive school environments, and the need to address the root causes of early sexual activity. While some teachers focus on prevention through abstinence and contraception, others advocate for a more holistic approach that includes addressing poverty, peer pressure, and limited educational opportunities. With all these, Teacher D elaborated by saying:

Students become more thoughtful when they realize the real-life impact of their choices. Sex education helps plant that awareness early on. You really start to see the shift when students understand that what they do now can shape what happens next—not just in theory, but in real life. They begin to think twice before rushing into something just because their friends are doing it or because they're curious. They ask more questions, they reflect more, and they start making choices with more care. When we talk to them about relationships, boundaries, or even just how their bodies work, something clicks. It’s like they realize, “Oh, this actually matters to me.” And that kind of awareness doesn’t happen overnight. That’s why starting early matters—because it gives them time to grow into that understanding, to learn from it, and to carry it with them as they face more complicated situations later on. It’s not about lecturing them—it’s about guiding them before life does it the hard way.

They also observed that when students are informed, they are more likely to speak up about concerns or ask for help—whether it’s about peer pressure, consent, or abuse—thereby preventing risky situations from escalating.

**CONCLUSION**

This study explored the perceived advantages and disadvantages of offering sex education in the Philippine basic education curriculum, with insights drawn exclusively from public school teachers. The findings reveal that, while sex education is widely regarded by educators as an essential component of a student's holistic development, its implementation in schools continues to face significant cultural, institutional, and logistical challenges.

Teachers consistently emphasized the relevance of sex education in equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary to make informed decisions about their bodies, relationships, and health. They observed that comprehensive sex education fills critical gaps in students' understanding, especially in a context where discussions on sexuality remain taboo in many households. It promotes emotional maturity, body awareness, mutual respect, and personal responsibility—qualities that contribute not only to individual well-being but also to broader public health goals.

However, teachers also identified several key challenges, including a lack of formal training, absence of standardized instructional materials, resistance from parents and communities, and limited time allocation within the existing curriculum. These issues hinder the consistent and effective delivery of sex education across schools and regions.

Despite these hurdles, the long-term societal benefits highlighted by teachers—such as reduced teenage pregnancy, lower rates of STIs, increased gender sensitivity, and the empowerment of youth—strongly support the integration of sex education into the curriculum. Educators also noted the positive impact of sex education on helping students avoid risky behavior, set healthy boundaries, and build stronger self-awareness.

Ultimately, the study concludes that sex education is not just about teaching the mechanics of reproduction—it is a crucial life skill. Its successful integration into basic education requires not only curriculum support, but also collaboration among educators, families, policymakers, and communities. By fostering an open, respectful, and informed approach to sexuality education, the Philippine education system can better prepare its youth to face real-life challenges with confidence, safety, and dignity.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the results of this study, it is strongly recommended that the Department of Education enhance the implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) across all basic education levels. This should include comprehensive training programs for teachers to ensure they are well-prepared to handle sensitive topics with accuracy, confidence, and cultural sensitivity. Equally important is the development of standardized and context-appropriate teaching materials to support consistent delivery nationwide. Strengthening engagement with parents and community stakeholders is also essential to address misconceptions and promote collective support for CSE. With adequate resources, policy commitment, and multi-sectoral collaboration, sex education can be a vital platform for equipping Filipino students with the knowledge, values, and life skills necessary to make responsible and informed decisions.

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