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ATTITUDE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS TOWARDS SEX EDUCATION IN MIZORAM

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Abstract: Sex education is emerging as an important branch of general education in our country. It is a controversial issue in the Indian society where sex and its related topics are still taboo subjects. Sex education is an awareness to understand the sex problems scientifically. It conveys all educational measures, which help the growing children to understand and face the problems of life. In the present study, the ‘Attitude Scale towards Sex Education’ developed by the investigator was employed to collect data. The main objective of the study is to find out the attitude of secondary school teachers towards sex education with reference to their gender and locality. The sample consists of 400 teachers (200 males and 200 females). Analyses were also done by testing the hypothesis to find out the significant difference in their attitude level with reference to their gender and locality. Significant differences in their level of attitude were found with reference to their gender. Findings show that majority of the teachers have positive attitude towards sex education; female teachers have more positive attitude towards sex education than the male teachers.

Keywords: Attitude, Secondary School Teachers, Sex Education, Gender.

I INTRODUCTION

The issues of sexual and reproductive health have remained a forbidden topic for a long time among the Mizo people due to the influence of cultural, religious and geographical factors in Mizoram. Sexual health is an important determinant of productivity and national development, yet, the mere mention of ‘Sex’ seems to evoke the feeling of embarrassment among both the young and the old. Adults usually refrain from discussing sexual matters with the young. In spite of this, there is an urgent need to address sexuality among our youth due to various reasons- like teenage pregnancy, sex abuse and exploitation, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV etc. Yet, the implementation of comprehensive sex education in the schools continues to be a controversial issue. Hence, it would be pertinent to discover the attitude of teachers towards sex education.

ATTITUDE

Attitude can be said as a specific mental state. It is a view point one holds towards a person, object, task or idea. It

stimulates the behavior and performance of an individual. It is a negative or positive feeling that an individual hold about objects, persons or ideas. Attitude may be explained as a mental preparedness which provide stimulus for an individual in some directions. Attitude develops gradually as a result of individual’s experiences. The degree or strength of an individual’s attitude may vary from extremely positive to extremely negative.

Allport (1935)¹ quotes “An attitude is a mental and neural set of readiness exerting directive dynamic influence upon the individual’s response to all objects and situations with which it is related.”

Freeman (1976)² says, “An attitude is a dispositional readiness to respond to certain situations, persons or objects in a consistent manner which has been learned and has become one’s typical mode of response. For example, one’s view regarding a class of food or drink (such as fish, liquors), sports, mathematics or democrats are attitude”.

SEX EDUCATION

Sex education is instruction on issues relating to human sexuality, including human sexual anatomy, sexual

reproduction, sexual activity, reproductive health, emotional relations, reproductive rights and responsibilities, abstinence, and birth control. Sex education is also understood as all educational measures which, in any way, help young people prepare to meet the problems of life that have their centre in the sex instinct and incidentally come in some form into the sex of every normal human being.

SIECUS (2001)³ defined sex education as a lifelong process of acquiring information and forming attitudes, beliefs, and values. It encompasses sexual development, sexual and reproductive health, interpersonal relationships, affection, intimacy, body image, and gender roles.

Collins (2008)⁴ states that sexuality education encompasses education about all aspects of sexuality including information about family planning, reproduction, body image, sexual orientation, sexual pleasure, values, decision making, communication, dating, relationships, sexually transmitted infections and how to avoid them, and birth control methods.

NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY:

Every nation, society and community has to work towards promoting the health of its people. When children acquire knowledge, desirable attitudes, values and life skills, they benefit in a variety of ways. These skills help children and adolescents to make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others and cope with and manage their lives in a healthy and productive manner.

In Mizoram, no studies have been conducted on the attitude of teachers towards sex education nor has any attitude scale towards sex education been constructed in the state. As there is no consensus regarding introduction of sex education in school and college syllabus, it would be very interesting to find out the real attitude of teachers in Mizoram towards this program. Teachers play vital role in the teaching setup as they play unique role in molding the personality of the students during their formative period of school life which will in turn effect the future generation in their overall development. They play an important role in giving sex education to children as it is a very sensitive and delicate topic which needs full caution. Children spend a large amount of their time in schools with teachers so they have a better chance than parents to give sex education. Hence, it is especially relevant that a study of such kind is conducted. The result will also highlight measures needed to be taken for improvement of teachers' attitude towards sex education.

II RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW

Kumar (2017)⁵ in his study on Attitude of School Teachers towards Sex Education in Srirangam Taluka, Trichy District, found that more than half of the respondents (52%) had positive attitude towards sex education. There is no significant sex difference in the attitude towards sex

education among the school teachers. There is no significant relationship between the age of the respondents and their level of attitude towards sex education.

Shah (2014)⁶, in his study on Perception of school teachers about sexual health education, found that majority of teachers strongly expressed the need for sexual health education in their school. Although most of them reported that they rarely come across a question related to sexual health in their routine classes, they were almost confident in handling such questions. Majority of them agreed that sex education should be integrated with general health education sessions in routine classes, rather than having separate sessions. Most of them positively, expressed their preparedness to undergo training for imparting sexual health education in their school. This study of school teachers clearly revealed that most of them felt the need for sexual health education in their school.

Goel (2014)⁷ conducted a study "Attitude of female school teachers towards teaching of sex education". The research is concerned with female teachers' attitude towards the teaching of sex education in senior secondary schools. Using a random sampling technique, 200 female teachers from different government schools of Bathinda and Muktsar districts of Punjab were taken as samples for the study. The findings of the study revealed that there exists significant difference in the attitude towards teaching of sex education between married and unmarried female teachers'. Urban female teachers showed significantly more favorable attitude towards sex education than the rural female teachers. The attitude of female teachers who are in the age group of 36-46 differ significantly from the age group of 25-35 towards sex education.

Toor (2012)⁸, in his study on the attitude of teachers, parents and adolescents towards sex education, found that mostly teachers have favourable attitude towards sex education. Majority of the teachers reported that teachers need special training in discussing sexuality with students. Mostly parents believed that sex education would help children to be more responsible in their sexual behaviour. Findings also showed that male teachers had a significantly more favourable attitude towards sex education as compared to female teachers; Fathers showed significantly more favourable attitude towards sex education than mothers; highly educated parents had significantly more positive attitude towards sex education than less educated parents. He also found that 69% of the respondents think that boys and girls in co-education should be taught together. The attitude of boys towards sex education is significantly more favourable as compared to girls.

Bhasin & Aggarwal (1999)⁹, in their study on Perceptions of teachers regarding sex education in National Capital Territory of Delhi, found that majority of school teachers (73%) were in favour of imparting sex education to school children. Regarding contents of sex education, 90% agreed to the inclusion of reproductive anatomy, physiology

including menstruation and birth control measures like condoms and oral pills. However, a majority of school teachers did not want sex education to include topics like abortion, premarital sex and masturbation etc. Fourteen years of age was considered to be the most appropriate for imparting sex education by 28.6% of school teachers. School teachers and doctors were considered by 69.4% and 63.6% of the respondents respectively to be the most appropriate persons for providing sex education.

Dutta (1979)¹⁰, in his study on Teachers' attitude towards imparting sex education in school, found that the attitude of teachers towards sex education was favorable. Experience of the teachers seemed to have no influences on their attitude, but ~~the city and~~ sex difference had some influence.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To find out the attitude of secondary school teachers towards sex education in Mizoram.
2. To compare the attitude of secondary school teachers towards sex education with reference to their gender.
3. To compare the attitude of secondary school teachers towards sex education with reference to their locale.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY:

1. There is no significant difference in the attitude of secondary school teachers towards sex education in Mizoram with reference to their gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the attitude of secondary school teachers towards sex education in Mizoram with reference to their locale.

METHODS OF THE STUDY:

Descriptive survey method is adopted for the study.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE:

The sample for the present study consists of 400 teachers (200 males & 200 females) selected randomly from secondary schools of all the districts of Mizoram.

TOOL USED

An Attitude Scale towards Sex Education developed by the researcher was employed for collection of data.

MODE OF DATA ANALYSIS:

For hypothesis testing, data analysis were made employing descriptive statistics such as; Mean, Standard Deviation and inferential statistics such as; Test of significant difference between two group Means (t-test).

III RESULT AND INTERPRETATION

Objective No.1 : To find out the attitude of secondary school teachers towards sex education.

The following table no. 1 shows the number and percentages of teachers' attitude towards Sex education.

Table no. 1

Attitude of secondary school teachers in Mizoram towards sex education

Attitude	No. of teachers	Percentage
Positive Attitude	178	44.50%
Moderate Attitude	127	31.75%
Negative Attitude	95	23.75%

Table 1 highlights that out of the 400 teachers, 44.50% have positive attitude towards sex education, 31.75% have moderate attitude and 23.75% have negative attitude towards sex education at the secondary school level in Mizoram. This shows the largest percentage of teachers had positive attitude towards sex education.

Discussion

Since it is mostly the teachers who takes responsibility in imparting sex education in Mizoram, teachers at the secondary schools are mostly well informed about the true characteristics of sex education and its importance for the adolescent students. They seem to know that sex education would prevent unwanted pregnancies, enhance healthy relationship between opposite sex, and prevent transmission of HIV infections and STDs. Most teachers recognize that it is essential to educate the students on the basic processes of human reproduction, therefore it is not without a reason that the present study also found that majority of teachers have positive attitude toward sex education.

Objective No. 2: To compare the attitude of secondary school teachers towards sex education with reference to their gender.

The following table no. 2 shows the gender difference in the attitude of secondary school teachers in Mizoram towards sex education.

Table no. 2

Gender difference in the attitude of secondary school teachers towards sex education.

*significant at 0.05 level.

Category	Number	Mean	S.D	MD	SE _{MD}	t-value	Sig. level
Male Teachers	200	102.1950	11.7540	2.375	1.0938	2.171	*
Female Teachers	200	104.5700	10.0578				

Table No 2 reveals that there is significant difference in the attitude of secondary school teachers towards sex education with reference to their gender.

Therefore, the null hypothesis that assumes that there is no significant gender difference in the attitude of towards sex education at the secondary school level in Mizoram is rejected since the two groups differed significantly at .05 level of confidence. A comparison of their mean score shows that this difference is in favour of the female teachers, as their mean score is higher than their male counterparts. The result indicates that the female teachers have higher attitude towards sex education than their male counterparts. This means female teachers are more positive in their attitude towards sex education than the male teachers.

Discussion

Mizo society is a patriarchal society where men play a dominant role. In the early times young males were taught different life skills in the bachelors’ dormitory by older men, while females were not allowed to enter the dormitory. The Mizo males by tradition were expected to take the initiatives in

courting the females; it is the men who should woo the females. Men were freer to discuss about sex while females were expected to remain ignorant. Even in the present day, Mizo females are less empowered in matters related to sex. Females are not expected to discuss sex related topics freely and are often encouraged to suppress their sexuality and sexual needs. As a result, there is little chance for them to have knowledge about sex and its related topics, therefore, perhaps female teachers have a greater desire to teach more about sex and its related issue. Consequently, this could be one of the reasons why the female teachers’ attitude towards sex education is more positive as compared to their male counterparts.

Objective No.3 : To compare the attitude of secondary school teachers towards sex education with reference to their locale.

The following Table No – 3 shows the comparison of the attitude between all rural and all urban teachers towards sex education.

Table no. 3

Location difference in the attitude of secondary school teachers towards sex education.

Category	Number	Mean	S.D	MD	SE _{MD}	t-value	Sig. level
Urban teachers	200	103.990	9.92737	1.215	1.09866	1.106 _{ns}	NS
Rural teachers	200	102.775	11.95235				

Table No.3 reveals that there is no significant difference in the attitude between rural and urban teachers towards sex education at the secondary school level in Mizoram. Therefore, the null hypothesis which assumes there is no significant difference in the attitude towards sex education between the rural and urban teachers at the secondary school level in Mizoram is accepted. A comparison of their mean score shows that although there is no significant difference in their attitude but the urban teachers have a higher mean score in the attitude towards sex education than the rural teachers at the secondary school level in Mizoram.

Discussion

Because of the advancement in information technology, development of transportation system, access to information and materials, the lifestyles and the attitudes of the urban and rural areas are becoming more and more identical. The internet provides not just information and entertainments, but also constant and instant communication especially through social networking and sites such as whatsapp and facebook. Therefore, the attitudes of the rural and urban areas are slowly inclined to come to an agreement. This could be the reason why the present study finds no significant differences in the attitude of rural and urban teachers with respect to introduction of sex education at the secondary schools.

IV CONCLUSION

The importance of education for human being cannot be over stressed. Education is the only way to get knowledge. It is the key to have a happy and stable life and helps man to have a wider outlook. In every society educated people are considered highly reputable as they have better chance to contribute to the community. In the present study also, it has been found that majority of the teachers have positive attitude towards sex education at the secondary school level in Mizoram. It is not wrong to say that teachers know the real condition where adolescents today are living as the children spend majority of their time in schools with their teachers. Teachers also realized the importance of sex education as it can prevent many sex related problems. So, this may be the plausible reason why their attitude towards sex education is positive.

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