



**Copyright** © The Author(s). 2022 This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

**Citation:** Batool, S. F., Sajid, U. Ethical Concerns of teaching Sex Education to Undergraduate Students in Rural Areas of Karachi. *PJE*. 2022; 2(1): 01-06.

**Corresponding Author Email:**  
ujala@aeirc-edu.com

**Funding:**  
The author(s) received no specific funding for this work.

**Conflicts of Interests:**  
The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

**Received** 18/02/2022  
**Accepted** 30/04/2022  
**First Published** 29/06/2022

## Original Article

# Ethical Concerns of teaching Sex Education to Undergraduate Students in Rural Areas of Karachi.

Syeda Farah Batool<sup>1</sup> , Ujala Sajid<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Karachi, Karachi-Pakistan.

<sup>2</sup>Advance Educational Institute and Research Center, Karachi-Pakistan.

## Abstract

**Background:** Traditional values endure in many areas of life, including sexual activity, despite significant modernization and improved gender equity in recent decades. School-based sexual health education has been suggested as a good place to start. Its holistic and interactive nature aims to improve students' sexual and reproductive health and rights by developing their knowledge, attitudes, and life skills. This study aims to understand the rural student's perspectives and feeling about school-based sex education in order to assess their attitude and foster better communication and collaboration between students and teachers.

**Methodology:** The current cross-sectional study was conducted from November 2021 to December 2021. Data was collected using a self-administered structured questionnaire. Participants were selected from different private and government institutes in the rural area of Karachi-Pakistan. A total of 50 Students filled out the online questionnaire. Data were analyzed using SPSS.20.

**Results:** A total of 50 students participates in the study. 32 (64%) of the students lived in a nuclear family, while 18 (36%) of the student lived in a joint family. 66% (33) of students believe that Sex Education should be given at early age in schools and Colleges. Maternal and Child Health is the topic that all the study participants (100%) believe must be included in the sex-ed curriculum, while Birth control methods and safer sex practices are the least interesting topic. 34 (68%) students believe that providing sex education at a higher educational setup is ethically and morally justified.

**Conclusion:** Students prefer to get sex education from their parents and the knowledge they got at School. Moreover, pupils are substantially more conservative in their sexual beliefs and actions when it comes to certain issues taught at educational institutes.

## Keywords

Sex Education, Ethical Consideration, Undergraduate Students, Rural Area



## Introduction

Sex education can be defined as the education of human sexual anatomy, reproduction, intercourse, human reproductive health, reproductive rights and responsibilities, abstinence, contraception, family planning, body image, sexual orientation, sexual pleasure, decision making, communication, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). This domain also covers the area that helps in avoiding STIs and in-depth research in birth controlling methods<sup>1</sup>.

It is reported that adolescence is the period of life that is characterized by rapid growth and development, and it is the group that has limited knowledge about sexual and reproduction health<sup>2</sup>. Adolescents have little knowledge about the natural processes of puberty, sexual health, pregnancy, or reproduction. Therefore, sex education in the modern world is considered an integral part of the learning process that begins in childhood and continues till adult life since it's a lifelong process<sup>3</sup>.

Many studies from different regions have found that comprehensive sex education programs result in safer sexual behavior. However, sex education is still being implemented in an ineffective manner<sup>4</sup>. The development of HIV in the 1990s fueled the initial awareness of the need to learn more about sexual knowledge and attitudes among young people. According to current Chinese national guidelines for health education in primary and secondary schools, sex education should provide age-appropriate educational content, with a focus on reproductive system diseases and sexual morality, as well as warnings about the negative influences of premarital sex<sup>5</sup>.

Sexuality Education in Pre- and Postsecondary and Professional Training Settings, according to recent studies, keeps instructors and students informed about current trends and challenges in sexuality education in colleges, universities, and professional training institutions<sup>6</sup>. In 2011, the law was amended to require university students to take courses in the "psychology of sex and love<sup>7</sup>." In 2017, it was suggested that sex education electives be included

in university health education, bearing in mind the ethical duties under which they should be received<sup>8</sup>. However, because sex education programs in schools and universities are not publicly assessed, there is little motivation to provide them<sup>9,10</sup>.

Open discussion about Sex in developing countries like Pakistan is still largely a taboo, and research in this area is still relatively new. It has been reported that reproductive capability is now established at an earlier age, but the subject of sex education, including reproductive knowledge and adolescent sexuality, is still taboo in most societies, especially in rural areas of Pakistan. Unfortunately need for sex education is not perceived and fulfilled in most of the rural areas of Pakistan, and so the perspective of the students from rural areas is still an area of interest, and more work is needed in this regard. The current study aims to understand the rural student's perspectives and feeling about school-based sex education in order to assess their attitude.

## Methodology

A cross-sectional study was conducted on randomly selected students from educational institutes (government/private) in the rural areas of Karachi-Pakistan from November 2021 to December 2021. The study data was collected using a self-administered structured questionnaire from similar studies conducted on ethical concerns of sex education and was modified based on our objective to assure the content validity of the data. A total of 50 students from different private and government institutes in the rural area of Karachi-Pakistan were included in the study. The survey was conducted using an online form. Completion of the form indicates the consent of the participant. The online form includes demographic questions related to the participant's age, gender, type of institute, family, and socioeconomic status. Participants were then asked about giving sex education at early age and questions related to the ethical concerns of teaching Sex Ed.

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 20.0. Descriptive analysis was used to calculate the mean

and standard deviation for age. The categorical data, including gender, type of institute, family, and socioeconomic status, were expressed in frequency and percentage.

## Result

A total of 50 students participated in the study, of which 22 (44%) were male, and 28 (56%) were female. 74% of the study student were aged

between 18-and 23 years, while 26% were above the age of 23 years. The majority of the study participants were from Government educational Institutes (60%), while 20 participants were affiliated with the private sector. 32 (64%) of the students lived in a nuclear family, while 18 (36%) of the student lived in a joint family. Almost 66% (33) of students from the study believe that Sex Education should be given at early age in schools and Colleges (Table 1).

**Table 1: Baseline Characteristics of the Study participants.**

Variables		n (%)
<b>Age</b>	18-23	37(74)
	>23	13(26)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	22(44)
	Female	28(56)
<b>Types of Institutes</b>	Government	30(60)
	Private	20(40)
<b>Family</b>	Joint	18(36)
	Nuclear	32(64)
<b>Socio-economic Status</b>	Upper Class	3(6)
	Middle Class	37(74)
	Lower Class	10(20)
<b>Should Sex Education be given at early age (Like School, College)</b>	Yes	33(66)
	No	17(34)

\*Values are given as n(%)

Table 2 highlight the topics that the students of the rural area find ethically correct and must be covered in the sex education curriculum. Maternal and Child Health is one such topic that all the study participants (100%) believe must be included in the sex-ed curriculum and is considered ethical to teach. While the least interesting topic, as suggested by the study population, is Birth control methods and safer sex practices (28%). Similarly, Correct names for genitals, Puberty, and Reproduction are also considered ethical and appropriate topics to teach by 60%, 66%, and 62% of the students, respectively (Table 2).

**Table 2: Topic of the sex education curriculum that students find appropriate or ethically correct.**

	Not at all Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Extremely Important
<b>Correct names for genitals</b>	-	20(40)	30(60)	-
<b>Puberty</b>	-	9(18)	33(66)	8(16)
<b>Reproduction</b>	-	13(26)	31(62)	6(12)
<b>Birth control methods and safer sex practices</b>	-	36(72)	14(28)	-
<b>Sexually transmitted diseases</b>	-	4(8)	22(44)	24(48)
<b>Maternal and Child health</b>	-	-	50(100)	-
<b>Menstruation and its hygiene</b>	-	3(6)	36(72)	11(22)

<b>Sexual Coercion and Sexual Assault</b>	-	22(44)	28(56)	-
<b>Personal Safety (to prevent child sexual abuse)</b>	-	21(42)	29(58)	-

\*Values are given as n(%)

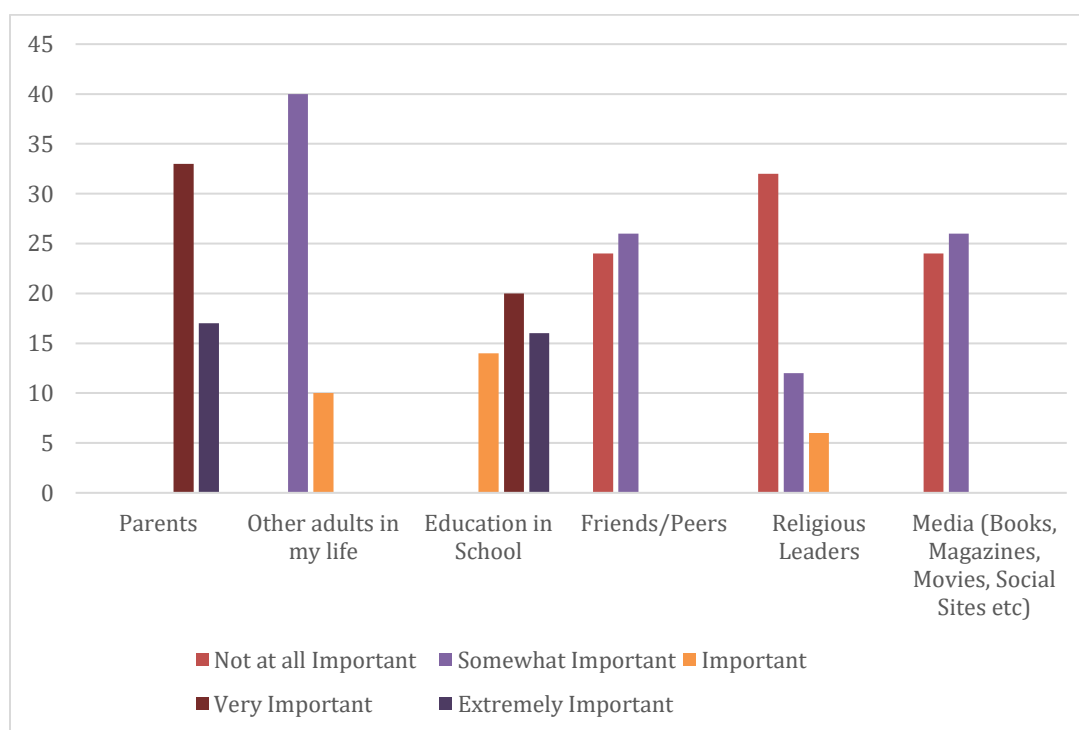
\*N = 50

Regarding the perception of students about providing Sex Ed and its associated ethical consideration, almost 34 (68%) of students believe that providing sex education in higher educational setup is ethically and morally justified. Moreover, almost 78% of the study participants believe that it is ethically appropriate to provide Sexual Health Education at the grade level of 9-12 (Table 3).

**Table 3: Student's Perceptions about providing Sex Ed and associated ethical Considerations**

Variables	n (%)	
<b>In which grade do you consider that it ethically appropriate to provide Sexual Health Education:</b>	Grade 3	-
	Grade 4-5	-
	Grade 6-8	11(22)
	Grade 9-12	39(78)
	There should be no sexual health education in schools and colleges.	-
<b>Do you feel that providing sex education in a higher educational setup is ethically and morally justified?</b>	Yes	34(68)
	No	16(32)

\*Values are given as n(%)



**Figure 1: Most socially, culturally, religiously appropriate sources for influencing the perception of Sex Ed.**

Figure 1 represents the perception of the study participants regarding the most socially, culturally, and religiously appropriate sources for influencing Sex Ed. It is seen that majority of the study participants believe that parents and education in School are considered the most appropriate source for influencing the perception of Sex Ed (Figure 1).

## Discussion

Pubertal age is a period of evolution during which one's health is mostly stable and physical and sexual maturity is attained<sup>11</sup>. However, they are more prone to reproductive and sexual health hazards throughout this phase, which is defined by self - determination, psychosocial naivety, impulsiveness, and recklessness<sup>12-14</sup>. Unpredicted or unprotected Sex is one of these dangers, as it can lead to sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unexpected conception, and unsafe abortion<sup>15</sup>. Adolescents in several underdeveloped nations avoid discussing sexual issues with their parents as a result of socially unacceptable culture<sup>16</sup>.

The majority of the data they require is available online. Many times, patchwork knowledge comes from peers with similar interests. Sex education refers to the process of educating, raising awareness, and disseminating details concerning sexual issues. Awareness of the functions of sexual organs is taught, as well as moral, ethical, cultural, and religious values, in place to evade "abuse" of the genitals<sup>17-19</sup>. The primary objective of providing sex education in educational institutes is to not only mitigate the negative effects of sexual behavior at a tender age, as many people claim but also to recognize the value of having accurate and comprehensive information about sexual attitudes and to understand human sexual identity as an integral part of one's personality and skills<sup>20-22</sup>.

## Conclusion

Our findings show that the majority of students prefer to get sex education from a variety of sources, including their parents and the knowledge they got at School. It's also been stated that when it comes to certain issues taught at educational institutes, pupils are substantially more conservative in their sexual beliefs and actions. This might lead to a lack of sexual understanding in teenagers, which can lead to risky actions.

## Acknowledgement

Authors would like to acknowledge all the participants who actively participate in the study.

## Conflict of Interest

None to declare.

## References

1. Fentahun N, Assefa T, Alemseged F, Ambaw F. Parents' perception, students' and teachers' attitude towards school sex education. *Ethiopian Journal of health sciences*. 2012;22(2).
2. Kumar R, Goyal A, Singh P, Bhardwaj A, Mittal A, Yadav SS. Knowledge attitude and perception of sex education among School going adolescents in Ambala District, Haryana, India: a Cross-Sectional Study. *Journal of clinical and diagnostic research: JCDR*. 2017 Mar;11(3):LC01-LC04.
3. Balistreri KS, Alvira-Hammond M. Adverse childhood experiences, family functioning and adolescent health and emotional well-being. *Public Health*. 2016;132:72-78.
4. Grunseit A, Kippax S, Aggleton P, Baldo M, Slutkin G. Sexuality education and young people's sexual behavior: A review of studies. *Journal of adolescent research*. 1997 12(4):421-453.
5. Ministry of Education. Notice of the Ministry of Education on Printing and Distributing the "Guidelines for Health Education in Primary and Secondary Schools". 2020. Available at [http://www.gov.cn/gzdt/2008-12/27/content\\_1189107.htm](http://www.gov.cn/gzdt/2008-12/27/content_1189107.htm)
6. Maddock JW. Sexuality education in postsecondary and professional training settings. Routledge; 2014.
7. Ministry of Education. 2020. Available online: [http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A12/moe\\_1407/s3020/201105/t20110528\\_120774.html](http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A12/moe_1407/s3020/201105/t20110528_120774.html)
8. Ministry of Education. 2020. Available online: [http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A17/moe\\_943/moe\\_946/201707/t20170710\\_308998.html](http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A17/moe_943/moe_946/201707/t20170710_308998.html)
9. Zhang L, Li X, Shah IH. Where do Chinese adolescents obtain knowledge of Sex? Implications for sex education in China. *Health Education*. 2007.
10. Saleem Y, Ahmed S, Noushad S. Sexual abuse among married females; A threat to mental and emotional health. *IJWE*. 2017;3:12-18.

11. Denno, D.M.; Hoopes, A.J.; Chandra-Mouli, V. Effective Strategies to Provide Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Services and to Increase Demand and Community Support. *J. Adolesc. Health* 2015, 56, S22–S41.
12. K. J. Fitzgerald and K. L. Grossman, *Sociology of sexualities*. SAGE Publications, 2017.
13. L. Tiefer, *Sex is not a natural act & other essays*. Routledge. 2018.
14. A. Dey, "Formal And Informal Sexuality Education: A Study Of Kolkata," 2015.
15. Zimmerman, J. *Too Hot to Handle: A Global History of Sex Education*; Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, USA, 2015.
16. Montgomery P, Knerr W. Review of the Evidence on Sexuality Education. Report to inform the update of the UNESCO International technical guidance on sexuality education. Paris: UNESCO; 2018. Available at: <https://www.icmec.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/International-Technical-Guidance-on-Sexuality-Education-Jan-2018.pdf>
17. Dyson S. *Parents and Sex Education: Parents' attitudes to sexual health education in WA schools*. Melbourne: La Trobe University, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society; 2010. Available at: [https://healthywa.wa.gov.au/~/\\_media/Files/HealthyWA/Original/Sexual-health/SexualhealthParentsShortReport.pdf](https://healthywa.wa.gov.au/~/_media/Files/HealthyWA/Original/Sexual-health/SexualhealthParentsShortReport.pdf)  
[http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media\\_asset/ITGSE\\_en.pdf](http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/ITGSE_en.pdf)
18. R. G. Simmons, *Moving into adolescence: The impact of pubertal change and school context*. Routledge, 2017.
19. Santelli, J.S.; Kantor, L.M.; Grilo, S.A.; Speizer, I.S.; Lindberg, L.D.; Heitel, J.; Schalet, A.T.; Lyon, M.E.; Mason-Jones, A.J.; McGovern, T.; et al. Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage: An Updated Review of U.S. Policies and Programs and Their Impact. *J. Adolesc. Health* 2017, 61, 273–280.
20. Hall, K.S.; McDermott Sales, J.; Komro, K.A.; Santelli, J. The State of Sex Education in the United States. *J. Adolesc. Health* 2016, 58, 595–597.
21. Secor-Turner, M.; Randall, B.A.; Christensen, K.; Jacobson, A.; Loyola Meléndez, M. Implementing Community-based Comprehensive Sexuality Education with High-risk Youth in a Conservative Environment: Lessons Learned. *Sex. Educ.* 2017, 17, 544–554.
22. Foley, A. Sexuality Education Policy Implementation in Two Rural Midwestern School Districts. *Sex. Res. Social. Policy* 2015, 12, 347–358.