

**THE EFFECT OF SEX EDUCATION ON SCHOOL BOYS AND GIRLS: A CASE OF
SELECTED PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN LUSAKA, ZAMBIA**

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated on sex education in seven selected schools of Lusaka District, Zambia. This study was conducted in seven primary and secondary schools; Harry Mwangi Nkumbula primary, New Chunga Primary, Chunga Secondary, Nelson Mandela Secondary, Twins Park Primary, Daina Kaimba Primary and Barlastone Park Primary schools. The population of this study comprised of district education board secretary, head teachers, teachers and pupils in Lusaka district of Zambia respectively. The total sample size of 200 respondents from selected primary and secondary schools were interviewed particularly, 2 officers from the ministry of education, 150 pupils and 48 teachers. The primary data was collected through interview guide.

From the results obtained, it shows that there is the integration of sex education in some subject to make learners aware of involving themselves in sexual activities. Therefore, there was danger especially to school going girls and boys that could make them disturbed in terms of schooling. Sex education is not there in curriculum of Zambia. No wonder, getting rid of HIV/AIDS will be difficult among school going children. The curriculum developers 'must' make sure that sex education has been provided to every school to lessen early pregnancies, sexual transmitted infectious diseases and marriages. Though, the ministry of education was coming up with some measure to help learners in school by making sure that every lesson delivered must have a component of sex education. Pupils involving themselves in illicit activity; the blame does not go to the parents alone but also the ministry of education through teachers for not sensitize and mentioning dangers of engaging in early sexual relationship. Therefore, some schools were not even trying to embed sex education. There was a high and not interesting numbers of school boys and girls drop-outting of schools and marrying at the very tender age. In addition, girls become pregnant due to the absence of the most important information they should learn in class. Further findings showed that some of the selected schools do not have clubs where pupils could learn different things not only at home, church and community gatherings. The teachers being co-parents who supposed to nurture the young ones for the betterment of their lives. The recommendations were put forward to address the problems the learners were facing.

Key Words: Sex Education, Positive effects of Sex education, Negative effects of Sex education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sex education should be taught in schools because it brings about awareness among school boys and girls, and how they should keep themselves from sexual activities at the tender age in order to excel. The pupils also realized the importance of avoiding sex on their daily activities. Though some of the teachers integrated in every lesson planned to sensitize learners about the dangers of

sex at their age. Sex education which is sometimes called sexuality education or sex and relations attitudes is the process of acquiring information and forming attitudes and beliefs about sex, sexuality identity, relationship and intimacy. Children in schools are deprived from the necessary information they should have in order to be responsible members of the community.

Previous empirical studies on global perspective

Goldfard & Lieberman (2020), “dating and intimate partner violence prevention: good quality studies demonstrate a range of positive outcomes for programmes that focus on prevention of dating violence and intimate partner violence among both middle school and high school youth. There is strong evidence that programmes positively influenced: improved knowledge and attitudes about, and reporting of, dating and intimate partner violence, decreased dating violence and intimate partner violence perpetration and victimization and increased intentions and behaviours to intervene when witnessing dating and intimate partner violence (bystander attitudes and behaviours).”

Adolescent girls often lack knowledge about sexually transmitted diseases, contraception and other sex-related topics. In order for our children to make informed decision, we must provide them with honest and informative answers to their questions. Therefore, parents can only provide as much information to their children as they have themselves or as much as they are comfortable giving. Haberland (2015) disclosed that whether sexuality education programmes that address gender and power in sexuality and HIV education are more effective in changing health outcomes.

Lameiras-Fernandez et al (2021) states that sexuality education programmes in school settings, via digital platforms and those that combine both formats. The studies focused mainly on reducing risk behaviours, thereby omitting themes such as pleasure and well-being. This means that sexuality education needs to address sexual desires. This should not be presented in an authoritarian which presents sex education as something which should not be engaged in. This further poses the question in an individual’s mind as to whether educators are able to deal with such topic. One also wonders if such topic does not place educators in the vulnerable position with regard to their personal and professional values. This research sook to understand whether educators feel confident and comfortable teaching sexuality as this may demand that they explore their own personal and ethical values.

The teacher’s perceptions of the teaching of sexuality education in primary and secondary schools was viewed as significant because secondary schools where more learners reached adolescent stage. It is important to understand how educators perceive the teaching of sexuality in secondary schools where they interact with teenagers at this stage of their lives. It can be suggested that adolescent sexual desires are at the highest point in their life span. Kivela et al (2014) studied the cost-effectiveness of the national school-based sexuality education programme in Estonia. The sexuality education curriculum in Estonia is a three-year programme. It was implemented starting in 1997 and by the time of the study (2009) it had reached 190,000 students. Sexual desire is the dominant and basic emotional and adolescence because the overall sex hormonal system is activated at this point. Bourke et al (2014) investigated the relationship between school sexuality education and sexual health behaviours at first sexual intercourse and later in adulthood in Ireland using nationally representative data. Results indicate that respondents who received sexuality education were more likely to have first sexual intercourse at an older age and use contraception

on this occasion. Sexuality education also significantly increased the likelihood of using contraception at first sex, when first sex occurred before 17 years of age.

Therefore, instructors must stress abstinence as a preferable means of prevention which primary and secondary education programme requirement throughout the schools. Curriculum must also consist of the responsibilities of family membership and adulthood including issues related to reproduction, abstinence, dating, marriage and parenthood as well as information about sexuality transmitted diseases, sexuality and lifestyle.

Garcia-Vazquez (2019) assessed a sexuality education programme in secondary school in Asturias (Spain). There was an increase of knowledge immediately after the programme and two years later. Further, there was an increase in skills immediately after the programme. Both girls and boys reported less practices with penetration and greater condom use the first time they had sexual intercourse. Today, more homes have computers, cable television, even cell phones now have internet access allows images of sex at our fingertips. Any child with access to the internet, television, movies or music has access to topics involving sexual content (Feldmar, 2011). In addition, sex is used to sell all types of products and young people are exposed to such advertisement daily. It is cardinal to break the cycle of treating sex as a taboo subject.

This can be especially problematic for girls, since the media objectifies girls as an eye candy, and boys are shown treating the women as sexual objects that they have no emotional connection to. When sex education is not provided at home or in schools, media images are free to be viewed by young a person which is very dangerous. Comprehensive sexual health education teaches not only the basics of puberty and development but also instils in young people that they have right to decide what behaviours they engage in and to say no to unwanted sexual activity. Furthermore, sex education helps young people to examine the forces that contribute to a positive or negative body image.

Adolescent is a period of incredible transformation during which adolescents experience a number of cognitive, hormonal and physical changes that influences their sexual decision making. The adolescent starts with the hormonal and physiological changes associated with puberty and ends with a social transition to adulthood. The hormonal shift at the onset of puberty not only affects physical maturation but also influences the brain that activating changes in emotions, goals and motivation (Crone and Dahl, 2012).

2.STUDY METHODOLOGY

The study used the survey research design for the purposes of formal evaluation to shed more light to the study. This study employed descriptive design because the aims were to accurately and systematically describe a population, situation or phenomenon. It could answer what, where, when and how questions but not why questions. A descriptive research design used a wide variety of research methods to investigate one or more variables. This design involved the collection of quantitative and qualitative. Majority of the respondents were, therefore, interviewed using the questionnaires. Denford et al (2016) assessed the impact of sexual abstinence-only programmes through a systematic review. Overall, the studies included in the review consistently found that abstinence-only programme can be effective in improving knowledge about how abstinence can

protect against STIs, about STIs and about the risks and consequences of unprotected sex and pregnancy, but not in changing behaviour.

In selecting the pupils who participated in this study random sampling technique was used while purposive sampling procedure was also employed on teachers and officers from the ministry of education because these people are expected to have adequate information that would provide the most comprehensive data for this study. A study may be stated with a survey, and then purposive sampling done based on the survey (Brown, 2006). In this case, the primary and secondary school teachers for guidance and counselling are believed to have rich in information about sex education.

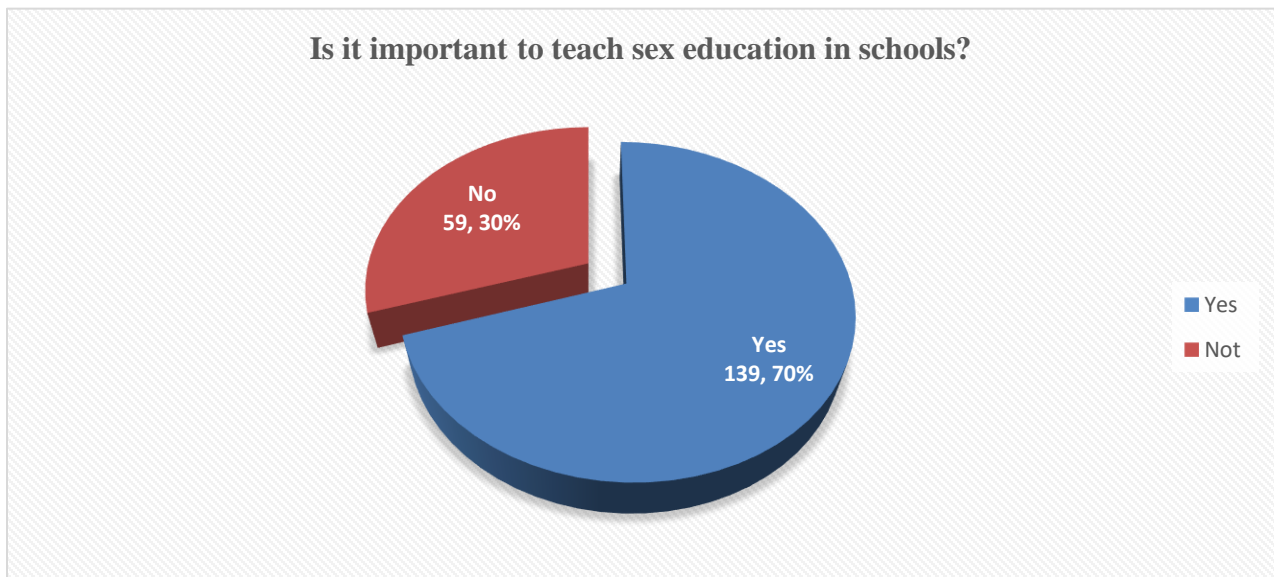
The study consisted 150 of Pupils, 48 of Teachers and 2 officials from the Ministry of Education, giving the total of 200 sample size of the study. The total sample size of the study was 200: this comprised of 7 schools, 28 from school A, B, C, D, E, F, and G respectively from each school in Barlastone and Chunga zone. The sample size of 150 pupils had made 75% and 48 had made 24% of teachers of the estimated total population (n=1000) in 7 selected schools and 2 officers from the ministry of education made 1% respectively.

3.FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data collected, views from district education board secretary officers, heads teachers, teachers and pupils. The table and figures show the views of respondents from Barlastone and Chunga areas of Lusaka District. The references are drawn from the analysis based on the literature review and the findings made from the field data.

Importance of teaching sex education in schools

Regarding the importance of teaching sex education schools, information was collected from teachers and pupils and presented in Figure 1 below.



Source field data, 2023

Figure 1: Is it importance to teach sex education in schools?

The findings in Figure 1 indicates the importance of teaching sex education in schools. Therefore, 70% (n=139) pupils and teachers agreed that sex education should be taught in school and 30% (n=59) of pupils responded that sex should not be taught in schools. Therefore, 70% (n=139) of respondents outnumbered those who said it should not be taught in schools.

Positive effects of sex education to school boys and girls

There are benefits of sex education especially to the school going boys and girls in Barlastone and Chunga areas of Lusaka District. The Ministry of Education in its policy, spells out the importance of sex education in all learning institutions. However, it is not included in the Zambian secondary school curriculum. The fact that young people experience problems arising from their developing sexuality cannot be overemphasized. It is common knowledge that sex education is not offered by parents in Zambian homes as noted by (MoE 1996).

Learners will be able to keep their virginity until marriage and they will be able to avoid drug and substance abuse. The studies shows that it is between the age of 15 and 20 years that the individual develops sex consciousness and many types of ideas and feelings are around during this period (Schenker, 2002). Sex education in schools does reduces the risk of sexual behaviour, provides increased knowledge about human sexuality and it does not increase sexual activity among young people. Kelly (2010) disclosed that children have the right to appropriate sex education and it is a violation of their rights to deny them the necessary knowledge and access to the services they require.

If the learners will be knowledgeable in sex education, it will help in the prevention of teenage pregnancies, spread of sexual transmitted infectious (STIs), human immune virus (HIV) and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). Sex education brings about awareness and it has a good impact to the side of the learners' academic performance and behaviour towards immoral act and it has a positive addition to them knowing right and wrong. Learners are able to understand what is involved in sex. Sex education encourages greater responsibility in sexual decision-making. Having the knowledge of sex education, learners will accept the stages they undergo during puberty and the dangers of allowing themselves in early sexual activities.

Therefore, sex education if it could be in a formal way of teaching it and standing as a subject, it can make young people get helped with the challenges faced on daily life. Sexual desire is the dominant and basic emotional and adolescence because the overall sex hormonal system is activated at this point. This is a crucial subject that should be taught both at home and school in enabling the children grow in good and decency way in Zambia at large.

Sex education has a very huge impact on school going boys and girls. This is a reason why schools in Barlastone and Chunga areas of Lusaka district must teach the learners. Nowadays, people are claiming to be civilized which has led to the abandoning of traditional beliefs. Traditionally, in Zambia at large, girls and boys were taught different at their age; there were extensive initiation ceremony for girls where they were kept in the house for a month. The girl (s) were to be taught the dos and don'ts that were expected in marriage and also how she can keep herself clean from

sexual activities before getting married. In like manner, boys used to be taught how to be responsible husband in future through elders who were in charge for knowledge.

Therefore, due to modernity, the cultural aspect is no longer considered as a cardinal and the gospel truth that can bring change in young people. Every parent or guardian is shunning away from traditional teachings which has contributed negatively to the lives of school going boys and girls. Parents and guardians have become irresponsible for their children expecting teachers to change them. United Nations General Assembly (2021) calls upon countries to committing to accelerating efforts to scale up scientifically accurate, age-appropriate comprehensive education, relevant to cultural contexts, that provides adolescent girls and boys and young women and men, in and out of school, consistent with their evolving capacities, with information on sexual and reproductive health and HIV prevention, gender equality and women's empowerment, human rights, physical, psychological and pubertal development and power in relationships between women and men, to enable them to build self-esteem and informed decision-making, communication and risk reduction skills and develop respectful relationships, in full partnership with young persons, parents, legal guardians, caregivers, educators and health-care providers, in order to enable them to protect themselves from HIV infection. Moreover, talking about sexual matters must commence at home with parents or guardians enabling the teachers just to emphasis on the topic at school. The behaviour of children nowadays is because of their parents who think sharing sex education at home with children is a taboo.

“Sex education is very cardinal to be in Zambia curriculum. The curriculum developers should provide materials for the learners and also the ministry of education to come on board in Chunga and Barlastone zone to conduct seminars with teachers that which can help Teachers to have vast knowledge about sexual comprehensive education to guide learners” (Respondent 3, 2023).

“Integrating in lesson plans it is not enough for the learners, it should be a subject on its own so that enough time should be allocated for the subject to bring sanity among school going boys and girls” (Respondent 7, 2023).

Similarly (Respondent 12, 2023) had this to say: *“the necessity of the subject ‘sex education’ in schools must be provided to avoid early pregnancies and marriages among young people in Lusaka at large. The number of school girls dropping out from school indicates the negligence of the ministry in helping the parents and guardians to ensure comprehensive sexual education is provided to their children.”*

“In Zambian society, it is a taboo parents talk about sex with their children and these has led a lot of adolescent children to be at risk” (Respondent 16, 2023)

Regarding the positive impact about sex education, information was collected and presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1.1: Show learning at school, home, church and community gatherings.

Learners	
School	Home, church and community gatherings
70% (n=105)	30% (n=45)

Source: field data (2023)

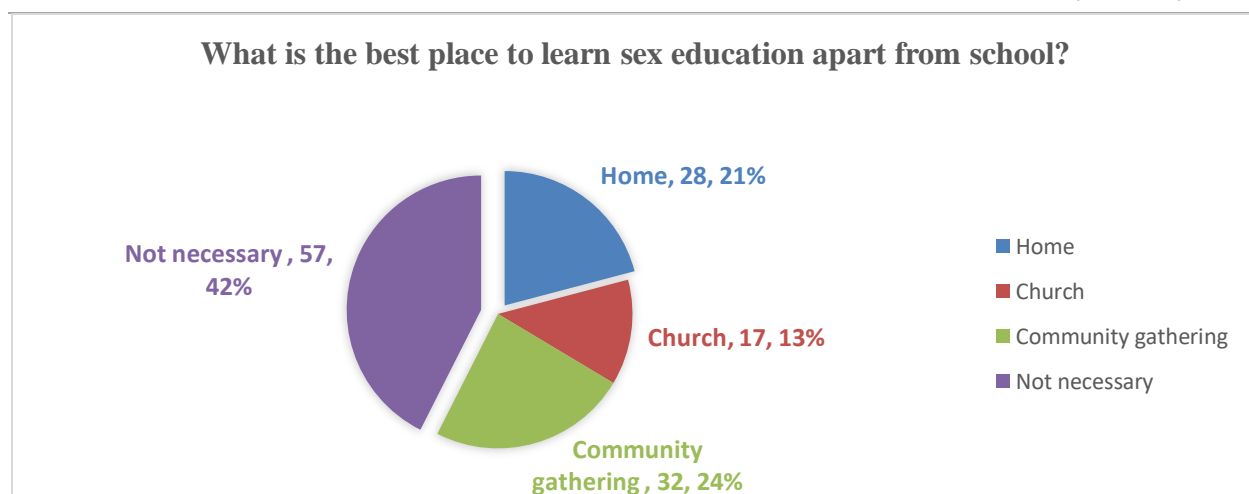
The Table 1.1 shows that 67% (14) of learners learn basics of sex education at school through the initiatives of their teachers by integration in lesson plans and 33% (7) of learners learn at home, church and community gatherings. Therefore, the findings shows that 67% (N=14) of respondents learnt sex education at school and 33% (N=7) of respondents learnt sex education at home, church, and community gatherings.

Maintaining contemporary adolescents in primary and secondary schools have access to formal sex education but indirectly in their biology, home economics and social studies. They also acquire substantial knowledge about sex and love from literature, books, novels and films. Therefore, number of teachers encouraging the ministry of education through the curriculum developers to speed up the process of bringing the subject on board in order to alleviate the challenge the young boys and girls are facing in this error. In addition, few learn from their parents and guardians in which the number of children is huge compared to the delivery of information to them.

Crone and Dahl, (2012), stated that the hormonal shift at the onset of puberty not only affects physical maturation but also influences the brain that activating changes in emotions, goals and motivation. The problem of dropping from school, early pregnancies and marriages are result of no information about sex education. Learners should be imparted with knowledge needed to them in order to have young people who are going to be responsible in the community or society. If children will continue unattended to, in future children’s behaviour will be unbearable. If teens are not provided with sufficient information, they will seek to get answers from somewhere else. The integration of sex education in the lesson it is not enough but it should be standing alone as a subject for the smooth delivery of content to the learners.

The best place to learn sex education apart from school

Regarding the best place to learn sex education, information was collected from pupils only and presented in Figure 2 below.



Source field data, 2023

Figure 2: What is the best place to learn sex education apart from school?

The findings in Figure 2 shows the suggestions of the respondents about the best place to learn sex education. Therefore, 42% (n=57) of respondents opposed the notion that sex education should be learnt, 24% (n=32) of respondents stated that sex education can be learnt at community gathering, 21% (n=28) of responded disclosed that sex should be learnt at home and 13% (n=17) of respondents suggested that sex education should be learnt at church. Therefore, 24% (n=32) pupils outnumbered those who wanted sex education to be taught.

Negative effect of Sex Education to school boys and girls

Based on the findings about of sex education, the researchers also drew the negatives. There were dangers in teaching sex education to school going boys and girls. This means that not everyone comprehends in terms of abstaining form sexual activities. UNESCO (2007), gives a report that nearly twenty percent of the Zambian population has AIDS. It is a disease strongly associated with poverty, affecting more women than men across Sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, nearly half of the population in Zambia is less than fifteen years old and there are an estimated 710,000 AIDS orphans, evidence of the crippling effects AIDS can have on a poor nation.

“Learners attempt to put into practice what they learn at school. They try to engage sexual intimacy to discover why they told to avoid it. This has led to contraction of sexual transmission diseases” (Respondent 17, 2023)

Similarly, (Respondent 21, 2023) had this say: *“early pregnancies are rampant among school girls because of integration of sex education. When boy impregnates there are few chances of responsible for the pregnancy, as a results, it affects girl’s education. For this sex education shouldn’t be introduced in schools.”*

“Sex education should be talked to only University and college students who are adults already decided what they want in life. These students are ready to find life partners after tertiary education” (Respondent 22, 2023).

Akim & Bechuke (2019) state, “transition from childhood to a young person is a challenging period for many young people and usually happens when most of them are still attending school. This is the period when many begin to have sexual intercourse. It is reported that the number of teenagers who admit to a sexual debut before the age of 15, is increasing in South Africa. A recent qualitative study conducted among young mothers in the North West Province, South Africa revealed that many teenagers get pregnant out of ignorance (lack of knowledge with regard to the physiology of their bodies and the consequences of sex).” For instance, some young women reported that they did not know that they would get pregnant if they had sexual intercourse on rare occasions. “Many young women also knew very little about contraception until they conceived. In fact, most young mothers revealed that they were informed about sexual matters and contraception during antenatal and postnatal visits. Such declarations motivated the researchers to undertake this study in order to examine the sources of sexuality education available for teenagers” (Akim & Bechuke, 2019).

4. CONCLUSION

Sex education is very cardinal to the school going boys and girls in order to growth as responsible members of the community. The ministry of education should cooperate with parents and guardians to make sure that sex education is being imparted both at home and school. Therefore, parents and guardians must know that charity begins at home, though; it is a taboo to talk about sex with your own children in Zambian society but that the way children can be helped. Home is a great school ever on planet earth that never failed to shape the image of children. In addition, children going to school should be an additional to impart good morals, attitude, and behaviour. When parents and guardians become too reluctant and leave everything to the teachers, it is difficult to change the manners of learners.

Therefore, Lusaka District Board Secretary, District Standard officer, Head teachers and teachers should work hand in hand with each other to come up with the measures that will help the learners in promoting sanity in schools on boys and girls where sexual matters are concerned. Sex education must stand as a subject for it plays a cardinal role in each and every child’s life. This will help the teachers allocate enough time for it in order to sensitize on the dangers of involving in early sex at the tender age and also helps to alleviate early pregnancies, marriage, sexuality transmitted infectious (STIs) and dropping-out from school.

Curriculum development center should produce the material needed in teaching sex education. This will reduce the drop-out from school among learners due STIs and early pregnancies and marriages. The problem is shown because learners are lacking comprehensive sexual education that can shape their destiny. All the Universities and Colleges in Zambia at large must have a component in their curriculum in order to produce teachers who will have information about sex education. The teacher should be taught at tertiary level to promote sanity in the education system. This means that when the teacher has been deployed having no knowledge about sex education, it is very difficult to teach because he or she will not be comfortable during the lesson and the possibility to skip important information is high.

The ministry of education must execute the policy of drop the boy responsible for the pregnancy until the girl feel like going back to school after delivery that is when the boy also will be allowed to continue with his education. This can lessen the early pregnancies and marriages. In addition, arresting elderly people who impregnate school girls as for this will bring positive development

amidst children in school. The government through the ministry of education must come up with the initiative of conducting seminars for the teachers about sex education and how in absence of the proper measures, teacher should be equipped with the detailed information about the subject. Since the teacher have power to build and destroy, therefore, let the government intervene on this to help children in school.

5.POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The Government through the ministry of education should come up with sex education subject at Primary and Secondary schools. This will help learners to be equipped with necessary information for their growth and exceling academically. Meanwhile, the ministry through Headteachers must impose the rule that in every lesson plan, especially in science subjects, sex education should be embedded.

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