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ATTITUDE OF TEACHERS TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SEX EDUCATION AT HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL IN KERALA

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Abstract

Even with growing recognition of the importance of adolescent sexual and reproductive health, the inclusion of sex education in school curricula continues to be a delicate and frequently debated topic. Teachers play a pivotal role in effectively incorporating sex education into standard educational frameworks while serving as essential guides in developing students' knowledge and values. This study seeks to explore the views, preparedness, and obstacles encountered by high school educators in Kerala regarding the implementation of sex education. A descriptive survey method was employed, and data were gathered from a sample of 300 high school teachers from both government and aided schools across selected districts of Kerala. A standardised attitude scale was employed to assess educators' perspectives across multiple dimensions, encompassing knowledge, comfort levels, perceived importance, cultural sensitivity, institutional support, and implementation challenges. The results indicate a diverse range of perspectives, with most educators taking a favourable stance on the necessity of sex education while also pointing out issues related to sociocultural taboos, insufficient training, and poor policy frameworks. The investigation highlights the necessity for thorough training initiatives for educators, well-defined curriculum structures, and nurturing school settings to promote a more inclusive and evidence-based perspective on sex education. The findings indicate that although numerous educators are open to the implementation of sex education, it is essential to tackle systemic barriers to guarantee its effective delivery. The findings from this study aim to inform policy development and the creation of teacher education modules that cater to the developmental and psychosocial needs of adolescents in Kerala.

Keywords: Sex Education, Teacher Attitude, Adolescent Health, Curriculum Implementation.

Introduction

Sex education has become an essential part of today's school curriculum, particularly given the growing concerns surrounding adolescent health, gender sensitivity, personal safety, and psychological well-being. As societies evolve and gain greater awareness, there is a growing recognition of the importance of providing young individuals with precise, suitable, and culturally pertinent information regarding human sexuality, reproductive health, emotional relationships, and responsible conduct. Across the globe, formal education systems have incorporated sex education with the aim of enhancing awareness, decreasing the rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), preventing child sexual abuse, advancing gender equity, and aiding the comprehensive psychosocial development of students. In the Indian context, sex education remains a debated and intricate topic. The National Curriculum Framework (2005) and later policy guidelines from organisations like the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) have advocated for the integration of sex education into the school curriculum as part of adolescence education. However, the execution of this initiative has frequently encountered opposition from various stakeholders. The inconsistent and hesitant adoption of sex education across Indian states can be attributed to social taboos, religious conservatism, insufficient teacher preparedness, parental apprehensions, and political reluctance. Kerala, known for its impressive literacy rate, progressive mindset, and strong focus on public education, offers a distinctive setting for exploring the opportunities and obstacles associated with introducing sex education in schools.

Educators significantly influence the educational experiences of learners. Attitudes, beliefs, and comfort levels significantly affect the nature, scope, and effectiveness of classroom instruction. In sex education, educators serve as both information providers and facilitators of dialogue and critical analysis regarding sensitive topics. Their readiness to interact with students regarding sexuality, gender identity, consent, and emotional well-being influences the quality of educational delivery. Positive teacher attitudes can cultivate safe and open classroom environments, while apprehensive or negative attitudes may perpetuate stigma and silence regarding critical topics. Analysing teachers' attitudes regarding the implementation of sex education is crucial for effective curriculum development, teacher training, and policy creation.

This study analyses the perspectives of high school educators in Kerala regarding the integration of sex education within the school curriculum. The research examines key dimensions such as educators' awareness of the significance of sex education, their perceived preparedness and confidence in its delivery, their perspectives on the cultural acceptability of sex education, and the institutional and infrastructural support accessible to them. This study examines the obstacles encountered by teachers, including insufficient formal training, unclear curricular guidelines, concerns regarding parental backlash, and personal unease with the subject matter. Research conducted in India and internationally has shown that although educators acknowledge the importance of sex education, their capacity to deliver it effectively is hindered by insufficient professional training, sociocultural barriers, and unclear policies. In Kerala, despite an advanced educational framework, implementation varies significantly according to individual teacher disposition, school ethos, and community context. This study systematically assesses the attitudes of teachers in the region to address knowledge gaps and offer perspectives on the effective integration of sex education into the high school curriculum.

This investigation utilises a descriptive survey approach and collects data from a representative sample of high school educators in both government and aid institutions across various districts of Kerala. The study employs a standardised attitude scale to assess teacher responses across six critical dimensions: knowledge and awareness, personal beliefs, pedagogical comfort, perceived student needs, cultural sensitivity, and systemic support. The results of this study are anticipated to guide the creation of specialised teacher education programmes, aid in the formulation of inclusive and evidence-driven sex education policies, and play a role in wider educational reforms focused on enhancing adolescent well-being and advancing gender justice. In conclusion, implementing sex education in high schools necessitates more than just policy approval; it requires a nurturing environment where educators are well-trained, empowered, and have a positive attitude towards the subject. This paper highlights the significance of teacher attitudes as a crucial element in the discussion surrounding sex education in Kerala and emphasises the necessity for a collaborative approach among various stakeholders to guarantee its effective implementation.

Need of the Study

Adolescence represents a pivotal phase in human development, characterised by swift transformations in physical, emotional, and psychological aspects. In this phase, adolescents start to shape their identities, navigate relationships, and face challenges concerning sexuality and gender. Increasing exposure to media, the internet, and peer influences has heightened adolescents' curiosity and made them more susceptible to misinformation, risky behaviours, and exploitation. In this context, delivering scientifically accurate, age-appropriate, and culturally sensitive sex education is crucial for empowering students with the knowledge and skills needed to make informed and responsible choices regarding their health and relationships. In India, the incorporation of sex education in school curricula has encountered considerable opposition from multiple stakeholders, including educators, parents, policymakers, and religious organisations. The phrase "sex education" frequently brings about unease and debate, largely influenced by existing social taboos and cultural conservatism. The lack of organised sex education in educational institutions has had significant repercussions, including a rise in teenage pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), instances of sexual abuse, gender-based violence, and mental health challenges among young people. National initiatives like the Adolescence Education Programme (AEP) and the guidance from the National Curriculum Framework clearly show that educators have faced challenges in implementation, primarily due to inadequate awareness, readiness, and support.

Kerala is frequently seen as an educational role model for other Indian states due to its high literacy rate and positive social indices. Sex education hasn't been methodically included in the high school curriculum, though, not even in Kerala. The subject is frequently completely avoided in schools or covered sparsely in biology or moral education classes. In this setting, teachers who are important agents in curriculum delivery play a crucial role. Their perspectives on sex education have a big impact on whether or not this topic is covered in the classroom. Despite acknowledging the value of sex education, many educators may feel unprepared or hesitant to teach it because of personal discomfort, a lack of preparation, or concerns about parental or community reaction. Some people could have conservative beliefs that run counter to the tenets of comprehensive sex education. Therefore, knowing teachers' views is essential to

determining the obstacles to successful implementation and creating interventions that can improve their ability, self-assurance, and drive to provide sex education in a meaningful way.

This investigation is especially crucial at this moment when there is an increasing focus both nationally and internationally on enhancing adolescent health, advancing gender equality, and ensuring safe school environments. This study aims to investigate the perspectives of high school teachers in Kerala regarding sex education, focusing on their perceptions, challenges faced, and possible facilitators. The results can guide the creation of specialised teacher training programs, supportive policies, and community awareness initiatives that collectively foster an environment conducive to the effective integration of sex education in schools. This study fundamentally tackles a crucial void in the realm of educational inquiry and application. The objective is to support the development of strategies grounded in evidence that empower educators, diminish stigma, and guarantee that sex education is recognised as a vital, acceptable, and effective component of the high school curriculum in Kerala.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the overall attitude of high school teachers towards the implementation of sex education in selected districts of Kerala.
2. To examine the differences in attitudes between male and female high school teachers regarding the implementation of sex education.
3. To compare the attitudes of high school teachers working in government and aided schools towards implementing sex education.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. There is no significant difference in the attitudes of male and female high school teachers towards the implementation of sex education.
2. There is no significant difference in the attitudes of high school teachers from government and aided schools towards the implementation of sex education.

Methodology of the Study

The present study adopts a descriptive survey design to assess the attitude of high school teachers towards the implementation of sex education in selected districts of Kerala. The data collected from a sample of 300 high school teachers through a standardized attitude scale were analyzed using percentage analysis and t-test as statistical tools. The sample included an equal representation of male and female teachers from both government and aided schools across three districts: Kasaragod, Palakkad, and Kottayam, ensuring diversity in educational contexts and sociocultural backgrounds.

Tools Used

The data collected from a sample of 300 high school teachers through a standardized scale for Teachers to measure the attitude of High school Teachers towards the Implementation of sex Education in schools.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

a) Percentage Analysis

Table 1
Distribution of Teachers Based on Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	150	50%
Female	150	50%

Source: Primary Data

The sample was evenly distributed between male and female teachers, allowing for comparative analysis of attitudes across gender lines.

Chart 1
Distribution of Teachers Based on Gender

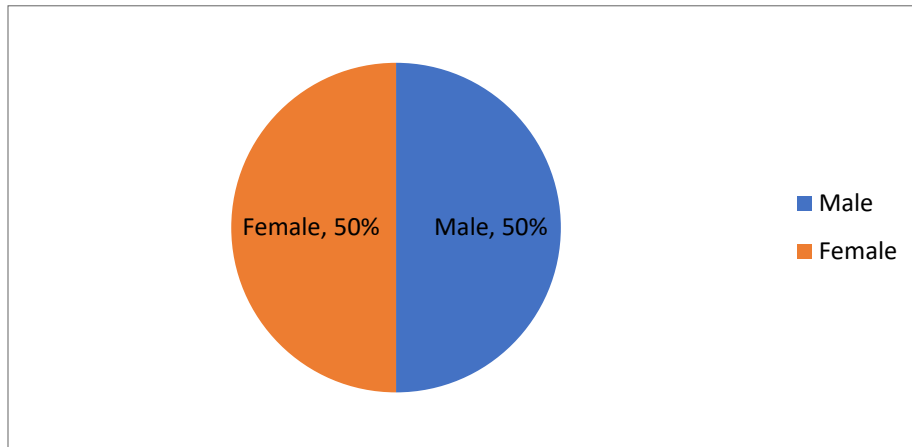


Table 2
Distribution of Teachers Based on Type of Management

School Type	Frequency	Percentage
Government	150	50%
Aided	150	50%

Source: Primary Data

This balanced distribution enables a fair comparison of attitudes among teachers working under different administrative frameworks.

Chart 2
Distribution of Teachers Based on Type of Management

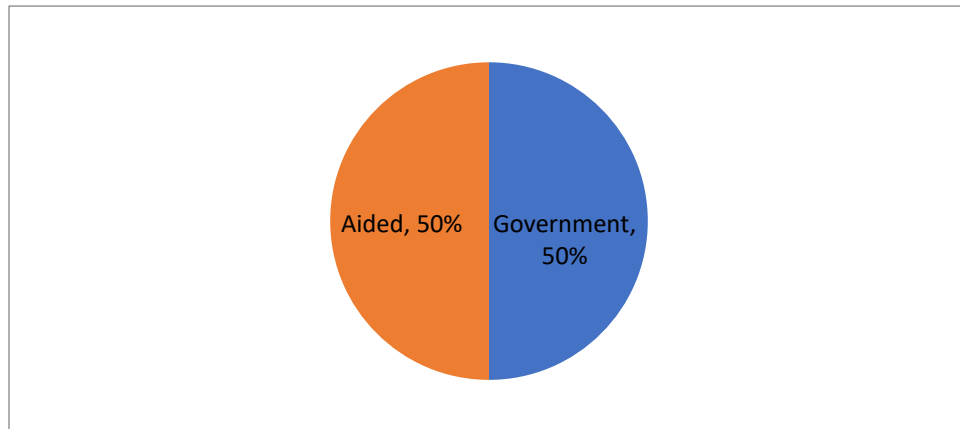


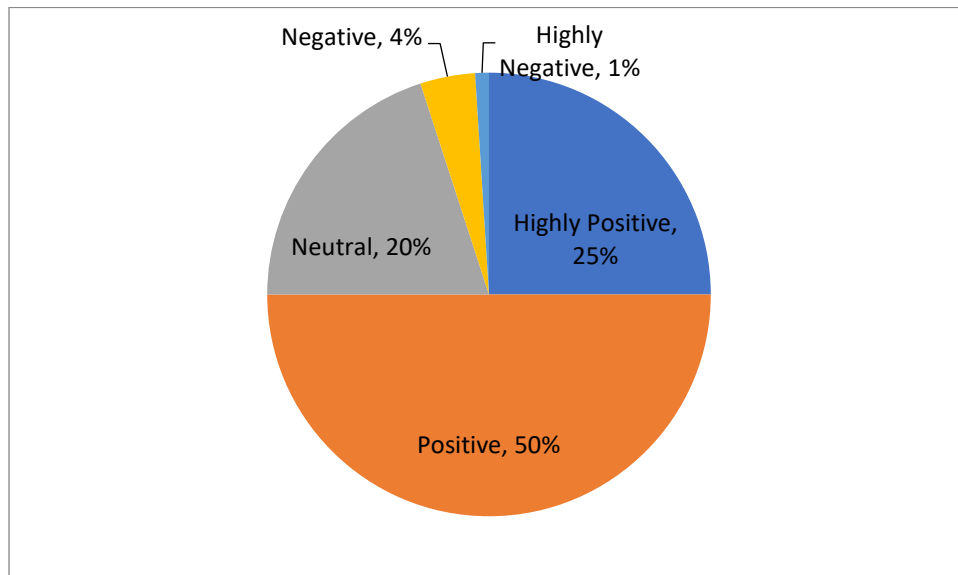
Table 3
Overall Attitude toward Implementing Sex Education

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Highly Positive	75	25%
Positive	150	50%
Neutral	60	20%
Negative	12	4%
Highly Negative	3	1%

Source: Primary Data

The table 3 depicts that the majority (75%) of the respondents showed either positive or highly positive attitudes toward implementing sex education in schools. This indicates that most teachers recognize the importance of sex education in adolescent development. However, a small but notable percentage (5%) exhibited negative or highly negative attitudes, highlighting persistent reservations or discomfort regarding the study area.

Chart 3
Overall Attitude toward Implementing Sex Education



b) T-test

Table 4
Gender-wise Comparison of Attitudes

Gender	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	t-value
Male	78.4	6.2	1.98
Female	81.2	5.9	
Level of Significance: $p < 0.05$			

Source: Primary Data

The table 4 explains that female teachers scored higher on average in terms of positive attitude towards sex education. The calculated t-value of 1.98 exceeds the critical value at the 0.05 level of significance, indicating a statistically significant difference between the attitudes of male and female teachers. Female teachers appear more open and confident in addressing sex education topics in classrooms compared to their male teachers.

Table 5
Comparison Based on Type of School Management

School Type	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	t-value
Government	79.6	6.1	1.22
Aided	81	5.8	
Level of Significance: $p < 0.05$			

Source: Primary Data

Table 5 reveals that aided school teachers had slightly higher mean scores, the t-value of 1.22 does not reach statistical significance at the 0.05 level. This suggests that there is no significant difference in the attitudes of teachers from government and aided schools regarding the implementation of sex education. Both groups largely perceive the subject as necessary and beneficial for students.

Findings of the study

1. A majority of teachers (75%) expressed either positive or highly positive attitudes toward implementing sex education in schools. However, 5% of teachers showed negative or

highly negative attitudes, indicating persistent concerns regarding cultural norms, personal discomfort, and institutional readiness.

2. Female teachers scored significantly higher than male teachers in terms of positive attitude towards teaching sex education. The calculated t-value of 1.98 was statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level, indicating a significant difference in attitude based on gender
3. There was no significant difference between government and aided school teachers' attitudes toward sex education. Both groups largely agreed on its importance and relevance.
4. It is necessary to begin the development of comprehensive teacher training programs that include gender-sensitive capacity-building initiatives.

Suggestions

To effectively implement comprehensive sex education in schools, it is essential to begin with the development of comprehensive teacher training programs that include gender-sensitive capacity-building initiatives, ensuring both male and female teachers feel confident and equipped to address sensitive topics. These programs should offer workshops, seminars, and certificate courses focusing on adolescent health, communication skills, and effective pedagogical strategies for delivering age-appropriate sex education. Alongside this, a structured curriculum framework should be introduced at the state level, integrating scientifically accurate, culturally relevant, and inclusive content into existing subjects such as biology, moral science, and physical education, while emphasizing gender diversity and the importance of consent. To ensure successful implementation, institutional support and policy clarity are crucial school administrations must allocate dedicated time, resources, and infrastructure, supported by clear directives from SCERT and DPI. Given the sociocultural sensitivities around the topic, it is equally important to address community concerns through engagement, using awareness campaigns, parent-teacher meetings, and collaboration with NGOs, health professionals, and counselors to build trust and reduce stigma. In addition, enhancing digital and multimedia resources can greatly support educators through interactive modules, e-learning platforms, and confidential tools for Q&A sessions and student engagement. Finally, a robust system of monitoring and evaluation should be established,

with district and school-level committees assessing program effectiveness and using feedback and impact assessments to continuously improve teaching practices and outcomes.

Conclusion

The quantitative and qualitative findings of this study reveal that while the majority of high school teachers in Kerala hold favorable attitudes toward implementing sex education, several systemic and personal barriers hinder effective delivery. Significant differences were found between genders, with female teachers showing greater openness to teaching the subject. No major differences were observed between government and aided school teachers. These insights underscore the urgent need for Structured teacher training programs focused on adolescent health and sexuality, Development of clear curriculum guidelines for sex education at the state level, Policy interventions to ensure institutional support and community sensitization, Gender-sensitive capacity-building initiatives to empower all teachers equally. By addressing these issues, Kerala can harness its progressive educational environment to implement a robust, inclusive, and scientifically accurate sex education program that meets the psychosocial needs of its adolescent learners.

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