



# Effects of Sexuality Education Among Teenagers: A Case of Selected Secondary Schools in Lusaka District, Zambia

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## Abstract:

*Sexuality Education leads to learners delaying the age of sexual initiation, increasing the use of condoms and other contraceptives when they are sexually active, increasing their knowledge about their bodies, and relationships and decreasing the frequency of unprotected sex. A rights-based approach to sexuality education (SE) seeks to equip young people with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values they need to determine and enjoy their sexuality physically and emotionally, individually and in relationships. It views sexuality holistically, as a part of young people's emotional and social development and recognizes that information alone is not enough. Instead, young people need to be given the opportunity to acquire essential life skills and develop positive attitudes and values. SE covers a broad range of issues relating to the physical, biological, emotional and social aspects of sexuality. This approach recognizes and accepts all people as sexual beings and is concerned with more than just the prevention of disease or pregnancy. However, many challenges have been faced in the field of SE but very little has been done to address many of these problems. Therefore, the study was indispensable as it helped to analyze the effects of SE among teenagers in secondary schools. The study employed both the qualitative and quantitative methods and a descriptive survey design that sampled head teachers, teachers and the learners. Data was obtained from the respondents by means of interviews and questionnaires. Tables, graphs and pie-charts were used and data was then analyzed by the use of software MS access and MS Excel. The study identified that through SE most teenagers learn about taking care of oneself especially on hygiene and other health. Additionally, the study also indicated that learning about SE helps teenagers to handle personal matters relating to sexuality such as their rights.*

**Keywords:** Sexuality Education, Contraceptives, Hygiene, Sex and Teenager

## INTRODUCTION

Sexuality Education (SE) also known as Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) has been defined by UNESCO as “an age-appropriate, culturally sensitive and comprehensive approach to sexuality education that includes programs providing scientifically accurate, realistic, non-judgmental information. Sexuality education provides opportunities to explore one’s own values and attitudes and to build decision making, communication and risk reduction skills about all aspects of sexuality. Sexuality education is a sex education instruction method based on a curriculum that aims to give students the knowledge, attitudes, skills and values to make appropriate and healthy choices in their sexual lives. Kalimaposo & Simuyaba, 2014) narrates that sexuality education (SE) gives young people accurate, age-appropriate information about sexuality and their sexual and reproductive health, which is critical for their health and survival. Sex education is the provision of information about bodily development, sex, sexuality, and relationships, along with skills-building to help young people communicate about and make informed decisions regarding sex and their sexual health. Sexuality education enables young people to protect and advocate for their health, well-being and dignity by providing them with a necessary toolkit of knowledge, attitudes and skills. It is a precondition for exercising full bodily autonomy, which requires not only the right to make choices about one’s body but also the information to make these choices in a meaningful way. And because these programs are based on human rights principles, they advance gender equality and the rights and empowerment of young people. Topics covered by SE, which can also be called life skills, family life education and a variety of other names, include, but are not limited to, families and relationships; respect, consent and bodily autonomy; anatomy, puberty and menstruation; contraception and pregnancy; and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV (Breuner, 2016).

The UNESCO 2016 evidence review revealed that sexuality education increases knowledge about different aspects of sexuality, behaviors and risks of pregnancy or HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). Additionally, this review reaffirms that sexuality education either in schools or out of schools, does not increase sexual activity, sexual risk-taking behavior or STI/HIV infection rates. Evidence reveals that school-based sexuality education should be a part of a holistic strategy. Multicomponent interventions, linking school-based sexuality education with non-school based youth friendly services including condom distribution, and providing training for health providers to deliver youth-friendly services and involving parents and teachers have proven most impactful and has been essential in reaching marginalized young people, including those who are not in school (BZgA, 2020).

The Zambian school curriculum like many other School curricula introduced sexuality education in its curriculum. From grade 5 to grade 12 in subjects such as social development studies, integrated science, home management, civic education, religious education and biology. However, the objectives in comprehensive sexuality education extend beyond meeting the objectives covered in the classroom texts books. Although the importance of sexuality education for the young adults is well documented in the literature around the world, sexuality education remains controversial in Zambia. Others believe that sexuality education is still not taught adequately and many times goes against the cultural and religious beliefs of the learners and society as well as acting motive for initiating sexual risk behaviors. Furthermore, it is still noted that a lot of teenagers are prone to predicaments related to knowledge on sexual reproductive health despite the introduction of sexuality education in the school curriculum.

### 1.2. Statement of the Problem

It has been observed that the topic of sexuality education remains a very controversial issue in Zambia regarding the coverage and behavior of teenagers, some sectors of society believe that some of the major problems related to illicit sexual behaviors among teenagers is as a result of early exposure to sexual information (Eleanor, 2019). Others believe that the sexuality education being offered is not enough to breed positive results and change the sexual behaviors. In response to the growing evidence base on the importance of involving parents in SE, there are increasing numbers of interventions working directly with parents (UNESCO, 2016). NGOs and UN agencies have piloted effective programs to equip parents with the information and skills to communicate effectively on these topics. While schools remain the primary setting for adolescent SE programs, many school-based programs

incorporate a parenting component, with those with the highest level of parental involvement having the greatest effect. However, in Zambia, issues of sexuality education are not received with open arms, many people have ill perception about the subject hence making it difficult for teachers to effectively teach on SE issues. In some cases, issues of religion contradict with the teachings found in sexuality education (Gifford, 2015). Some people believe that sex education gives students the knowledge of intercourse with partners making them possibly believe that they should participate in these acts as well (Bloom, 2018).

### 1.3. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the effect of Sexuality Education among teenagers at the selected secondary schools in Lusaka district, Zambia.

### 1.4. Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

- Identify the effects of sexuality education among teenagers in selected secondary schools in Lusaka district.
- Analyze the challenges associated with sexuality education in selected secondary in Lusaka district.

### 1.5. Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the Social Cognitive Theory which assumes that behavior is determined by the continual interaction between personal knowledge, skills, attitudes, interpersonal relationships, and environmental influences (Bandura, 2013). Most sexuality education curricula address cognitive learning; however, knowledge alone is not sufficient to change behavior. Therefore, Sexuality education programs using social cognitive theory incorporate behavioral skills practice and positive modeling of sexual behavior. (Bloom, 2018). Building skills through practice and modeling enables students to build self-efficacy, the belief that they can change behaviors, even when they experience challenges or barriers. An example of common sexuality education activity based on the Social Cognitive Theory is a role-play in which participants demonstrate and practice using skills to avoid and refuse pressure to have unprotected sex. The social cognitive theory (SCT) offers a conceptual framework that may explain how these factors potentially interact to shape young adults' sexual health. SCT suggests that rather than behavior being affected uni-directionally by personal and/or environmental factors, these three facets of psycho social functioning demonstrate triadic reciprocal causation. Specifically, SCT proposes that one's personal determinants including knowledge and perceived self-efficacy behavioral determinants, and environmental determinants of health are all interrelated (MoH & MoE, 2008). The opponents of sexuality education argue that sexuality education through the social cognitive theory encourages role play of what they are taught in the classroom thereby encouraging young people to practice sex at a tender age whether safe or not safe and therefore goes against most cultural and religious norms of society (Ailyn, 2012).

### 1.6. Significance of the Study

Although a number of studies have been carried out on sexuality education among teenagers, very few have specifically studied the effects of sexuality education on the teenagers. It was valuable that we researched on the effects of sexuality education on teenagers that society has been encountering since its introduction. It is therefore hopeful that the results of the study would be useful to educators through the findings in the sense that it will reveal best possible ways of teaching sexuality education and how to directly address such matters in classroom and school environment. Additionally, the study would be beneficial to policy makers in formulating policies that directly address problems that arise from the effects of sexuality education and that the study would also be helpful to organizations and individuals subsequently.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Study Design

The study adopted a mixed methods approach which is a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. Exploratory and descriptive designs were as well considered appropriate as they also allowed for more flexible strategies of data collection in order to answer the research questions. The study incorporated both qualitative and quantitative aspects of research. The study aimed at collecting information from respondents on the effects of sexuality education among teenagers at the selected secondary schools in Lusaka district, Zambia.

### 2.2. Research Site

The research was conducted in Lusaka district in Zambia at some selected secondary schools from which respondents were also sampled.

### 2.3. Population, Sample and Sampling Procedure

The population for the study comprised of the head teachers, teachers and learners at the three selected secondary schools. The target population was 600. The sample size involved a total of 80 respondents which included four (4) Head teachers, one from each selected school. Eight (8) teachers, two from each selected school. Sixty-eight (68) learners, seventeen (17) from each selected school. The study employed both purposive and simple random sampling on different participants from the selected secondary schools. Simple random sampling was used on learners and teachers whereas purposive sampling was used on the head teachers.

### 2.4. Data Analysis

In this research, data was analyzed qualitatively as the semi structured interview schedules were used as data collection instruments. Thematic approach was used, where data analysis started with the categorization of themes from the semi structured interviews schedules. The data gathered was analyzed according to the themes of the study, the order of the research objectives. Data generated from the questionnaires was analyzed manually and also, a combination of software MS Access, SPSS and MS Excel was used to analyze data.

## 3. FINDINGS

The following findings and discussions were presented according to set research objectives:

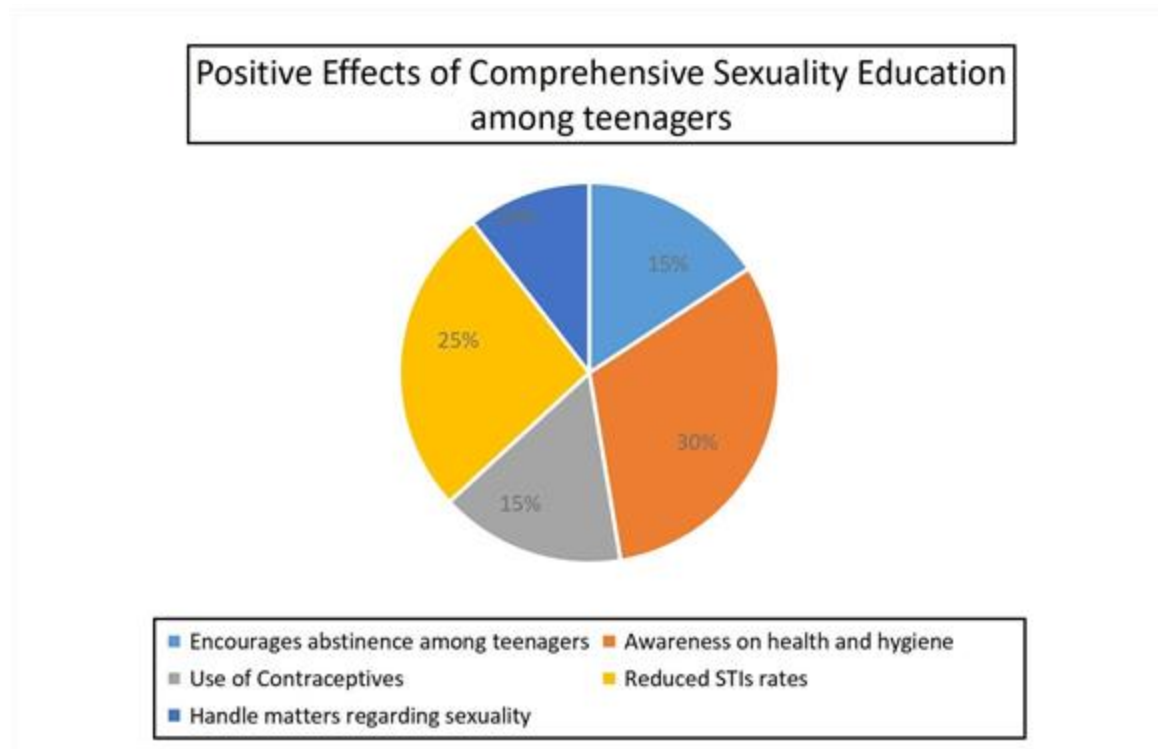
### 3.1. Effects of SE in Secondary Schools

The study findings showed that due to the introduction of SE in most of the schools in Lusaka learners have learnt both the advantages and disadvantages of abstaining from sexual activities. This has affected the learners on a positive aspect because most of the learners know what constitute real abstain. The findings showed that learners are no longer engaging themselves into sexual activities without knowing of the consequences hence it was revealed that most of the have started abstaining from sexual activities. The findings showed that most of the learners were made to be aware on the signs and symptoms of such disease or teenage pregnancies if they found themselves in such situations. The study showed that the learning of SE helped a lot of learners to learn about the use of contraceptives, it was revealed that learners were taught how to use condoms not only that they were taught on how Prep and PeP are used whenever they learners engage themselves into sexual activities. The use of contraceptives has really helped the learners to reduce on the number of pregnancies this is because most of the learners who engaged into sexual activities



utilized the methods of contraceptives such as on the use of condoms and emergence pill. The study showed that the coming of SE has contributed positively towards the well-being of the girl child.

**Figure1: Positive Effects of SE in Secondary Schools**



Furthermore, the study showed that the coming of the SE has helped to reduce a number of infections especially on STI infections among the learners. The study revealed that most of the learners are now exposed about what STIs are there symptoms and the way they can be dealt with if one is infected. The study also showed that in some schools, learners were able to approach guidance office and seek advice whenever they had encounter with the symptoms. However, this was only possible after the learners learnt about SE and how they can seek advice through the guidance office. The study showed that SE has always been the best when it comes to sensitization on the use of contraceptives and how STIs can be avoided. The study showed that learning about SE helps teenagers to handle matters relating to their sexuality such as their rights. The study further revealed that learners know more about rape, defilement, sexual abuse and sexual assault. They also learn about making decisions and giving concert as well as when to report to parents and other relevant authorities such as police when their rights are violated.

**Table 1. Negative Effects of SE in Secondary Schools**

Item Number	Negative effects of SE	Number of respondents
1	Uncomfortable when learning	25%
2	License to engage in sexual activities	65%
3	Disturbs focus	3%
4	Promotes abortion /contraceptive	7%
		<b>TOTAL 100</b>

Sexuality education been a highly controversial topic, the research has revealed that SE in secondary schools disturbs the focus of learners from other academic subjects. Some teenagers get to be very over excited when topics of sex and sex education are taught such as the focus is shifted from the importance of the subject to just a topic to discuss about and have fun. Furthermore, the research also revealed that learners see the topic as a license to practice sex and explore different sexual orientations. It also promotes affirmation and others feels it implies many peers are sexually active thereby encouraging peers to engage in sex. It also teaches teenagers to consent to sex or negotiate sexual encounters. Consent is often taught under sexual abuse prevention. Teenagers should be taught to consent to sex. Consenting to a sex act does not make that act healthy, acceptable, or safe especially when the actors are children or young teenagers who are not yet mature enough to understand the many side effects of premarital sex. SE has lamentably failed to establish abstinence as the expected standard. One problem with abstinence-only education is that it denies teenagers the chance to learn about acceptable options other than abstinence. No form of sex education has been shown to effectively convince teenagers not to have sex (Khamala, 2020).

The research further revealed that SE sits uncomfortable in the schooling context. It may encourage children to question their cultural belief. The main concerns by parents about sex education is that it sexualizes children. It may also train children to teach other children about sex and sexual pleasure through peer to peer initiatives thereby leading to controversial sexual rights. Talking to children about sexuality is a highly sensitive endeavor. The findings also revealed that SE presents contraception and abortion as a safe option for avoiding unwanted pregnancies. However, it omits data on the potential harm and side effects and consequences these methods may have on the mental and physical health these may have on the teenagers.

### 3.2. Challenges Associated with Sexuality Education

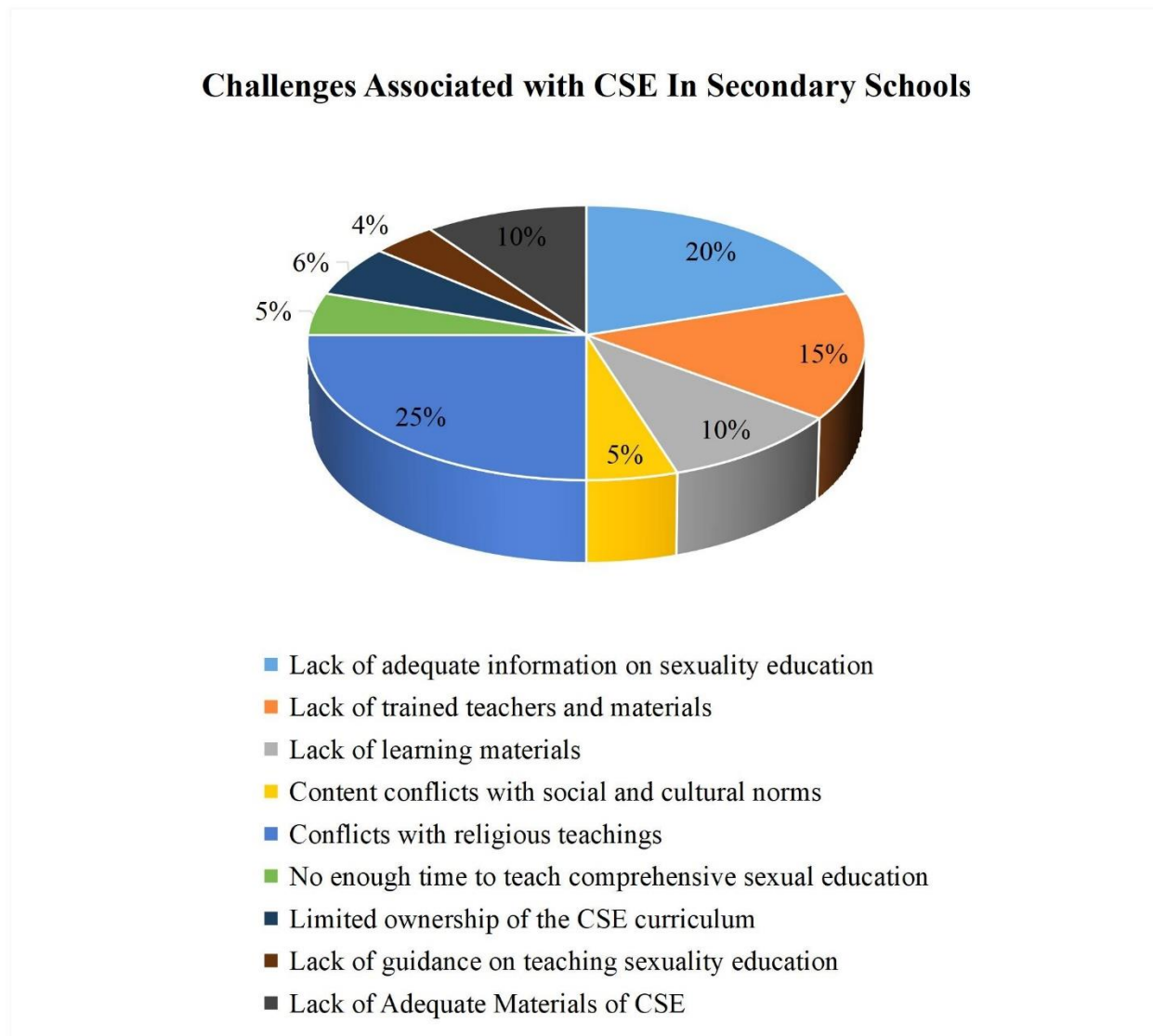
The research findings revealed that most of the schools in Lusaka district did not have adequate learning materials of SE only one department had some books, syllabuses and magazines on SE which was social sciences department. Other departments had completely nothing and this was a challenge to teach SE in most of the schools. It was also observed that the district had a number of leaners in different schools and lack of materials in SE made it a very big challenges for teachers to teach effectively SE. The findings revealed that lack of materials had also contributed negatively towards giving the rightful information on the learners and this made teacher to give any type of information they felt was appropriate among the learners.

The study also showed lack of enough information on sexuality education, this was evident by most of the respondents who had difficulties to express themselves on how sexuality education has contributed towards the well-being of the learners, and the only answer they could give which come out prominently was that it prevents teenage pregnancy. This showed that most of the respondents viewed SE as a subject that talks only about sex education rather than a universal subject that looks at the well-being of the learners in imparting good morals. The study showed that most of the schools did not have enough information on the type of lessons to give to the learners patterning sexuality education and this made it difficult for teacher to give proper guidance on the teaching of sexuality education.

The study findings revealed that there is need for the government to train more teachers in SE. The findings showed that a lot of teachers did not have the required skill specified in the curriculum of how to teach SE in secondary schools, however, it was noted that some of the teachers have been attending workshops which are usually sponsored by non-governmental organizations rather than government programs. It is from this background that the findings revealed need for more teachers to be trained in SE if specialized was to be archived. This finding is in line with on teachers' perceptions of sexuality education in secondary schools (Kasonde, 2013) in Botswana. The purpose of this study was to determine how teachers in senior secondary schools in Botswana felt and acted toward sexuality education. This cross-sectional, quantitative study aimed to determine the sexuality education knowledge and attitudes of 25 randomly chosen teachers in secondary schools in Botswana. The findings further revealed that the teaching of SE in most of the secondary schools had brought about conflict with the social and cultural norms of what

the society believed on. This was evident through which other respondents such as some teachers and learners attributed on how it was social not welcome by most of the parents of the schools teaching about how learners should use condoms when they engage in sexual activities. The figure below shows the challenges associated with SE in secondary schools;

**Figure 2: Challenges Associated with SE in Secondary Schools**



#### 4. CONCLUSION

The study noted that SE helped most of the learners to learn about taking care of oneself especially on hygiene. The findings revealed that most of the school going children have been taught on health matters especially the girl child and this has helped the learners to start practicing hygiene and safe sex though some of the teachers were against on safe sex education that was given to the learners. The study also showed that the coming of the SE has helped to reduce a number of infections especially on STI infections among the learners.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are actions that should be taken on the basis of the findings of this study:

- The Ministry of Education should provide funding from the government for the purchase of instructional materials in schools
- The government, through the Ministry of Education, should effectively implement the teaching of Sexuality Education in schools to help curb the problem of teenage pregnancies
- The researchers suggest that Sex Education be given its own slot on the weekly school schedule. The current fashion is to use it as a cross-cutting issue in another subject
- Schools should establish peer educator groups to help develop moral virtues in pupils and peer educator groups should have the Sexuality Education content made available to them for discussion

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