



SEX EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN: CONCEPTS, NEEDS AND STRATEGIES

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Abstract

Providing information about bodily development, sex, sexuality, and relationships, as well as skill development, is what sexual education is all about. It helps young people learn how to communicate about sex and make informed decisions about their sexual health. A very difficult subject in countries like Pakistan, where any talk of sexual activity is frowned upon, sexual education is one of the most pressing needs. Although abortions and sexually transmitted infections are prevalent in the country, it is also a country with a high prevalence of abortion (STIs). The general public's grasp of such matters is also fairly restricted at the moment. As a result, it is necessary to investigate the concepts, requirements, techniques, and advantages of implementing sexual education programmes in Pakistan, as well as to examine the current impact of the absence of such programmes and public education campaigns.

Keywords: sex education, abortions, HIV, sexually transmitted illnesses

Introduction

Sexual education is a sensitive issue in many countries throughout the world, notably in Asian countries. There has been a rise in the number of young individuals who engage in sexual activities such as early sexual debut, premarital sex, and multiple partners. Due to the fact that parents in our culture are too introverted to have a conversation with their children about sexual activities, it is vital to educate the kid on sex education. Secondly, most parents do not have a close relationship with their children, which leads in a disconnect between them and their children, as well as parents being unaware of the physical and psychological consequences of sexual transitions in their children. Getting information about sex, sexual identity, relationships, and intimacy, as well as developing attitudes and ideas about sex are all aspects of sexual education. The morality of society, religious beliefs, and educational standards are questioned by sex



education, but it educates youngsters about sex and helps them avoid immoral behaviours, adolescent depression, teenage pregnancies, and different sexually transmitted illnesses, all of which may be prevented. Children and teenagers are educated about sex as part of a sex education programme that aims to steer them away from immoral practises and teenage depression. There has been an increase in young people's risk for sexuality exposure because of the influence of media material that sees sexual activity as a sign of maturity. It aims to educate youngsters on how to protect themselves from the potentially harmful consequences of early sexual activity. Furthermore, it assists individuals in maintaining control over their sexual feelings, which, in turn, assists them in refraining from engaging in unethical and immoral behaviour. The results of a poll done by Blakeley (2006) revealed that "only around seventeen percent of respondents stated that sex education did encourage them to engage in sexual behaviours, with the other eighty-three percent strongly disagreeing (Blakeley 2006)." Sexually transmitted diseases, teen pregnancy, and adolescent melancholy can all be prevented with sex education. Growing popularity of pornographic websites stimulates adolescent sexual desire, which can only be suppressed by providing them with a sensible sex education as early as possible. Young people are prevented from developing immoral behaviours and becoming sexually exposed too early through sex education.

The need of Sex Education in Pakistan

Education on sexuality has always been a contentious issue, especially in industrialised countries like the United States. This isn't true, but most people around the world agree that some kind of sexuality education is important to protect young people from getting pregnant and getting sexually transmitted diseases (STIs), as well as to teach teenagers and young adults about normal sexual behaviours. Public talks about sexuality education, on the other hand, are seen as very bad in countries like Pakistan, where religious and traditional practises play a big role in the imposition of any kind of talk. Public talks about sexuality education are met with a lot of criticism and outrage from the general public. As a result, it is very vital to highlight the negative consequences of a lack of such understanding, as well as the implications of this lack of awareness for public health, particularly among young people. Men's misunderstandings about sexual behaviours were examined in a research done in Pakistan to better understand the present state of affairs. The vast majority of respondents (94 percent) admitted to masturbating, although only 31.4 percent felt it caused physical ailments, and a significant prevalence (76 percent) of respondents believed it was associated with feelings of guilt when they did so. This is most likely due to the fact that no type of sexuality education is taught in Pakistani public schools, leading to such beliefs.



The annual national abortion rate is currently 50 per 1000 women, according to one source, which estimates that Pakistan had 2.2 million abortions in 2012. Public awareness campaigns, or at the very least public discussion on safe sex practises such as the use of contraceptive devices and condoms, are urgently needed in Pakistan, where abortion is still a highly taboo subject and is now illegal if performed for socio-economic reasons. UNAIDS believes that in 2016, there were 130,000 persons in Pakistan who were infected with HIV, according to a research done by UNAIDS. Another study found that people with STIs had a very low level of understanding regarding the diseases they are afflicted with. Public understanding about sexual practises is important since these disorders remain despite strong religious and traditional attitudes on sexual intercourse; establishing legislative limits on the basis of religious and cultural beliefs has not helped in their reduction.. An American study found that increasing sexuality education in school curricula reduced adolescent pregnancy rates in general. There were higher rates of teenage births in states with high religious and conservative ranks, according to the survey. Due to significant resource limits, such as food and energy scarcity, and the country's inability to maintain a rapid population increase, sexuality education assumes even more significance in Pakistan, home to an estimated 190 million people. Even in a nation like Pakistan, where a multitude of concerns including population growth, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and high abortion rates are being addressed simultaneously by unlicensed, unregulated clinics, the value of sexuality education simply cannot be stressed.

Concepts

Not only in Pakistan, but practically elsewhere in the globe, the subject of sexual education is regarded to be a difficult one. A considerable deal of unrest has been witnessed in the community since since Zainab's rape/murder case and several other recorded occurrences involving rape, marital rape, child abuse, unplanned pregnancies, and other similar incidents. People have begun to speak up about their personal experiences, and the #MeToo movement has gained widespread attention in recent months. The time has arrived to devise plans for confronting these problems front on. Recent years have seen a rise in debates on the efficacy of sex education across a wide range of media channels. A long-term strategy is also necessary in order to improve the existing situation. This is a universe where the word "sex" is considered a derogatory phrase that must be avoided at all costs. There are numerous social evils that presently exist in Pakistani society, especially among the youth, and it is vital that a policy on mandatory sex education in secondary schools be developed in light of the rapidly deteriorating situation. Women will be educated about safe sex, contraceptive usage, and the health hazards connected with abortion as part of this study's objective of developing socially acceptable and successful policy options.



When it comes to sex education, a comparative cross-sectional study gives valuable insight into the perspectives of Pakistani Muslim parents and instructors. Uncontrolled quota sampling was used to disseminate a validated questionnaire to 418 participants, and a total of 273 people answered to the questionnaire. When asked if they believed that age-appropriate sexuality education should be taught in schools, 76.1 percent of parents and 64.4 percent of teachers said yes, according to the findings of this survey. The majority, on the other hand, considered that sex education was incompatible with Islamic theology. Bullying prevention and sexual abuse prevention were two of the most popular sexuality-related subjects, while pregnancy prevention received the least amount of support (see chart below). One of the most significant perceived obstacles to the establishment of sexuality education was the desire of some parents not to have the subject taught in school. Approximately 46% of the parents who responded stated that they had never even brought up the subject of sexuality with their child before. Prior to the implementation of any such curriculum-based programme, it is essential to educate the general public and train instructors in order to assure the supply of high-quality sex education to students. A key problem in Pakistan is the creation of scientifically correct sex education that is age appropriate and relevant to the context of the individual. Another challenge is the identification of methods for the efficient implementation of sex education programmes.

Strategies

When it comes to sex education, what are the appropriate standards? First and foremost, one should be aware of the numerous sorts of sex education that are out there. Though sex education may take many forms, the two most commonly seen in schools are "complete sex education" and "abstinence only" instruction. Sex training that covers the gamut of sexually transmitted diseases prevention, sexually transmitted sickness prevention, and proper contraception usage is called comprehensive sex education. For those who want to know the correct sexual orientation. Abstinence, on the other hand, emphasises the negative social, psychological, and physical consequences of premarital sexual activity. Social and religious morality are commonly discussed as a means to avoid teen sex, as well as its negative implications. Those who argue that abstinence is not helpful in the prevention of adolescent pregnancies and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases because it does not teach students on how to use condoms and other contraception for safe sex are incorrect. As previously said, both methods of education should be tolerated in Pakistan. It's critical to provide abstinence-type sex education to students in elementary and middle schools who are unaware of the perils of teen sex and marriage outside of their families and who don't yet have a sexual drive of their own. In order to limit the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases and undesired pregnancies, comprehensive sex education should be provided in secondary, college, and university settings. It is recommended by



Dr. Douglas Kirby that teachers use as their primary tool for informing students about the dangers of unprotected sex as well as how to avoid it (Implementing Sex Education), that they use age- and developmentally appropriate teaching methods and materials, and that they take into account cultural factors. These approaches are based on research that has shown them to be effective.

In light of the troubling issue raised by a lack of sex education in schools, it is recommended that the subject be taught in schools. Young women being pregnant at an early age is becoming an increasingly serious problem in today's society. "About four out of every five pregnancies among women aged 19 years and younger are unplanned (CDC 2011)," the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention did a study to find this out. This shows that the number of adolescent pregnancies is rising all over the world. It's because there isn't enough sex education in elementary and secondary schools. This makes them think they know a lot about human sexual behaviour. In reality, half of them have no idea what sex is about at all. A general study done by the World Health Organization says that a lot of people get sick, "each year in the United States, about 850,000 teenagers are confronted with the problem of teenage pregnancy" (Adolescent pregnancies). Furthermore, this is a fairly high percentage practically everywhere in the globe, including the United States. Teenage pregnancies are also on the rise in Pakistan, posing a threat to the health of young women and the morality of the country's culture. Teenage pregnancies are caused by a lack of sex education, since youngsters are uninformed of the precautions to take in order to avoid pregnancy. Many studies have revealed that adolescent pregnancies are prevalent in underdeveloped countries such as Pakistan, and that this is attributed to a lack of understanding about contraception among young women. A survey conducted by the World Health Organization found that "about 95 percent of adolescent births occur in low- and middle-income countries." Teenage births are more common in poor and less educated families, as well as in rural areas within a country" (WHO). Teenage pregnancies can have a variety of negative consequences, including unsafe abortion, the death of the mother, and an increase in the teenage birth rate. Women between the ages of 15 and 19 die most frequently from pregnancy-related complications, including delivery complications and botched abortions. Young girls are twice as likely to die after childbirth as women in their 30s, and the causes are both physiological and social. According to the World Population Fund, girls under the age of 15 are five times more likely to die than those in their thirties." Abortion under dangerous conditions is a major issue. This results in the death of the adolescent mother as well as the death of the newborn child. All of this demonstrates the critical relevance of sex education, particularly in middle- and lower-income countries like Pakistan. It would be a significant step forward to prevent all of the difficulties listed above, because sex education instructs one on how to have safe sex and avoid the calamity of having a pre-teen or teenage pregnancy. Thorough



sex learning has been shown to lower the risk of unwanted pregnancy since it covers every aspect of the subject, such as the usage of contraception and other issues. According to data conducted by Guttmacher Institute and Columbia University, improved use of contraceptives and abstinence sex education were responsible for around 86 percent of the drop in adolescent pregnancy between 1995 and 2002. Abstinence has a significant role in reducing pregnancy among younger teens aged 15–17, while the drop in the birth rate among teenagers aged 18–19 years was completely attributable to increased usage of contraceptives among this age group (American Journal of Public Health).

The other reason why sexual education should be taught in schools is because sexually transmitted illnesses are so prevalent (STDs). Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are a serious public health problem worldwide, and developed countries are working to curb their spread. "Sexually transmitted illnesses (STIs) are most prevalent among young persons between the ages of 15 and 24. Every year, more than 3 million young people get a sexually transmitted disease. The biological cause (WPF) is the primary reason why girls are at greater risk of contracting an STD than boys." Due to the fact that adolescence is a period of transition in one's physical and psychological characteristics, engaging in sexual activities while still adolescent can have disastrous consequences for one's health because one's nervous system and reproductive tissues are being harmed as a result of such activity. Many studies show that sexually transmitted diseases and unsafe sex may make someone's life more difficult than it would be for a normal male. Estimates from the United Nations Development Program put the number of HIV-positive Pakistanis at between 70,000 and 80,000. On the other hand, the number of officially recorded cases is far lower. Up until September 2004, the National AIDS Control Program (HIV/AIDS in Pakistan) had only received reports of 300 cases of full-blown AIDS and another 2300 cases of HIV infection, according to official figures. The lack of awareness about sexually transmitted illnesses is contributing to the rise in the number of cases. The World Health Organization found that "a paucity of sexuality education exists in many middle-class nations," according to a study undertaken by the organisation. There are only 36 percent and 24 percent of 15-24 year olds in low and medium income nations who have a complete and correct grasp of HIV prevention in a worldwide assessment of sexuality education (WHO). In terms of STIs, HIV and AIDS are the most frequent. Comprehensive sex education, a type of sex education, is used to prevent HIV infections. This education includes instruction in life skills such as how to keep one's sex safe and how to negotiate good sexual relationships with one's partner. In order to effectively reduce sexually transmitted diseases, several studies have demonstrated the necessity for a comprehensive sexual education programme. National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy found that many of these programmes either delayed or reduced sexual activity, decreased the number of sexual partners, and boosted condom or contraceptive usage. "Two-thirds of 48 comprehensive



programmes that supported both abstinence and the use of condoms and contraceptives for sexually active teens had positive behavioural effects" (Emerging Answers 2007). Despite the fact that the Pakistani government has made several attempts to lower the rising number of sexually transmitted illnesses, this is not the most effective method of combating these diseases. Teenagers' lack of understanding of the dangers of sexual activity is the root cause of these deadly illnesses. As a result, the Pakistani government should promote awareness among teens by instituting sex education programmes in schools.

People who are opposed to sex education claim that it calls into question our society's social values, standards, and morals as a whole. Those who oppose sex education claim that it is a contributing factor to children's moral decline. Such individuals are very opposed to the notion of sex education and believe that it is a scourge brought on by western civilization in general. The statement goes that "it is not the United States, where you may freely talk about sex; it is Pakistan." Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are attempting to promote birth control, abortion, and "Safe Sex," according to some conservatives. In modern democracies, discussing sex is extremely forbidden, while in conservative communities, discussing sex is quite normal. As soon as they mention that sex education is available in the United States, they question why this nation has the most pregnancies. Sex education in American schools has failed miserably in its goal of reducing the number of teenage pregnancies. In 2013, "the United States had the highest adolescent pregnancy rate, with 52.1 pregnancies for every 1000 girls in the population," a research said (age group of 15-19). Over eighty-nine percent of these pregnancies occur outside of marriage. Hispanic and black teenage girls are more likely (75% of 52.1 percent) than white adolescent females to become pregnant while still in their teens (Top 10 Countries with the Highest Rate of Teenage Pregnancy). In the minds of some, sex education is nothing more than a way to satisfy one's sexual cravings. The idea that "children shouldn't be driven into puberty" is one that is commonly expressed. Parental sex education is blamed for their children's increased interest in sexual experimentation. Contrary to popular belief, sex education does not promote sexuality or the development of negative habits. When it comes to abstinence education, the focus is on educating young people about the hazards of pre-marital sexual activity and how to prevent it. Assumptions that no one can conduct abortions are routinely made. According to those who reject it, the assertion is ethically wrong. Because of this, they believe that i-pills and abortion are among the myths that young people are being taught in sex education. In order to lower the number of adolescent pregnancies and the birth rate, sex education teaches students about birth control pills and abortions. When it comes to sex, it's not just about doing horrible things and then having to deal with the worst of it. The study's findings are at odds with those who reject Sex Education's goals. 'Nineteen studies were carried out to study the



behaviour of school and college students after they got Sex education,' says Slutkin. At the University of California, Los Angeles, Slutkin is a professor. Among the nineteen studies, fifteen were done in the United States, three were done in Mexico, Thailand and Denmark (and one in which the United States was compared to other countries), and one was a comparison of the United States to other countries. These studies did not find any evidence of an increase in the number of teenagers who started having sexual relations. A total of ten research found that youth engaged in safer sexual practises after receiving sex education, while six studies found that the adoption of sex education resulted in a general decrease in sexual behaviours or a delay in the commencement of sex activities among adolescents. According to Slutkin, "the remaining two studies similarly revealed a drop in sexual activity, albeit to a smaller level." These studies demonstrate that Sex education has a positive impact on society as a whole.

Sex Education and Islam

The general consensus is that sex education is incompatible with Islamic principles. They claim that Islam forbids open discussion of sex and the conduct of sexual relations. "Do not get close to adultery," God commands in the Quran. Without a doubt, it is a heinous act of evil that serves only to open the door to greater horrors (Quran17:32). Declare, "Verily, my Lord has outlawed the shameful actions, whether open or covert, crimes and transgression against the truth and reason" (Quran 7:33). Because, in their opinion, sex education is a source of adultery in our children's lives, they associate this notion with hostility to sex education. This is why sex education emphasises the need of "Safe Sex." However, this is a misunderstanding of the philosophy of Islam as it pertains to sex education on the part of the general public. The Qur'an describes Islam as "a comprehensive rule of life that has offered complete direction to its adherents in all areas of life." As stated by the "Sex Education for All" organisation, "sexual life" is the most vital component of human existence." Muslim scholars have written extensively on topics such as marriage, sexual relations between sexes and fornication as well as the importance of the mother's semen uterus. They've also covered topics like menstruation, childbirth, pregnancy (and delivery), the proper way to wash one's hands after having sexual relations, and how to perform ejaculation. In the time of Prophet Muhammad, people from all over the globe flocked to him for assistance on a wide range of issues, including their sexual health and well-being. A thorough teaching was provided by the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H). "Blessed are the ladies of the Ansar," observed Hazrat Ayesha (R.A), the Prophet's wife (PBUH), once, "because they did not let their shyness stand in the way of their quest for knowledge about their faith." All of this demonstrates that sex education has a special place in Islamic culture.



Key Findings

Pakistan has been identified as having a severe problem with regard to sex education. Based on data from the Policy Delphi Survey, 66.7 percent of respondents linked the increase in child abuse with the absence of sexual education, and 72.2 percent linked the rise in child abuse with the lack of sexual education. The same number of people agreed that sex education should be taught because it has the ability to solve most of the problems now linked with the subject. 60.1% feel that sex education would do harm to the person in terms of their religious or symbolic beliefs, and 86.7% think the most vociferous opponents of sex education come from religious organisations. People should be given pamphlets or books about sex education, as well as biology lessons, age-appropriate ads, standardised websites by the government, and family planning centres that teach sex education. Mothers should teach their children about sex at home and there should be no action analysis. They didn't all do as well as they could have on the new criteria of equity, efficiency, effectiveness, security, implementation and social acceptability. Social acceptability and how well it works were found to be the most important things to look at when deciding which option to choose. Aside from that, policy study revealed that the government would favour the option that is the most efficient and easiest to execute.

Parents, on the other hand, would want a socially acceptable and effective alternative, whilst non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and students would prefer an option that is effective while also increasing security in the community. It was discovered that there is a significant trade-off between efficiency and effectiveness throughout the evaluation process, as some of the options that scored highly in efficiency were found to score poorly in effectiveness, and the opposite was true. As a result of the government's requirement that students be taught about biology, age-appropriate ads and websites were used, as well as standardised government websites, family planning centres that teach clients about sex, and mothers who teach their children about sex at home are examples of alternatives that scored well on efficiency but not so well on effectiveness. While some other solutions, like door-to-door service by health professionals on sensitive subject areas and sex education presented under a different name, like physical/health education, got good marks for effectiveness, their efficiency was at best mediocre at worst. According to utilitarianism, only options that could help the whole world should be looked at. Furthermore, after looking at each choice in terms of the criteria, it was found that teaching sex education under the name "health education" was the best option, because it came out on top in the Policy Delphi Survey results. Kids should get a high-quality education that is based on medically proven facts and numbers, so that was the conclusion. It was also found that this policy alternative could be more effective if it had more resources, such as well-trained people, a big budget, and a well-designed course outline. Topics that cause distress or harm



should not be included. Because this approach was proven to be advantageous for all policy players, it has the potential to improve efficacy, social acceptability, and security, in addition to being very simple to execute.

Implications

The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education should collaborate in order to effect the necessary changes in order to deal with the deteriorating state of society. Concerns about the environment should be addressed in a systematic manner. A variety of strategies for dealing with the current difficulties might be developed during the short- and long-term periods. Media campaigns on age-appropriate ads are being planned for social media, billboards, and direct marketing. Family planning centres are also giving out pamphlets and free contraceptives to raise awareness. The health and education ministries are also working on an educational website or app about sex education, and NGOs are being encouraged to spread the importance of sex education. However, in order to achieve maximum resonance, a strategy for training the customary thinking of this culture must be developed. Because we live in a patriarchal culture, it is necessary to raise awareness among individuals about the need of educating women about their rights in romantic relationships. When it comes to workplace harassment, specific anti-harassment laws should be made mandatory, and offending organisations should be penalised or dismissed if they violate them. Physical health education should be made mandatory in schools, and the curriculum should be adjusted to meet the needs of students in all grades. Those at the elementary, middle, and high school levels should include foundational material, while classes at the university and college levels should cover more advanced material. In order for teachers to be effective, they must be properly credentialed and free of personal bias. Additionally, parents should be invited to an open house to learn more about the class curriculum and course plan, as well as to have all their questions answered, among other things. As a result, our study implies that by putting all of these steps into practise, it may be feasible to develop an effective system that might aid in preventing this evil from taking root.

Conclusion

Not only in Pakistan, but practically elsewhere in the globe, the subject of sexual education is regarded to be a difficult one. It has been observed in the community after the rape/murder case of Zainab and additional incidences of rape, marital rape, child abuse and unexpected pregnancies have occurred. The #MeToo movement has gotten a lot of traction recently as more and more people begin to speak up about their own personal experiences with sexual harassment and assault. Front-facing techniques must be devised for coping



with these difficulties. Recent years have seen a rise in debates on the efficacy of sex education across a wide range of media channels. Furthermore, in order to improve the existing situation, it is essential to raise public awareness for a long period of time. A forbidden phrase like "sex" has become so commonplace in our society that it is avoided at all costs. Compulsory sexual education (CSE) for secondary school students is an absolute necessity in Pakistan, given the current state of the country's society, especially among the country's youth. For this purpose, the Policy Delphi Survey will be used to produce policy choices that are socially acceptable and successful in reaching the intended objectives by educating women on themes such as safe sex, the use of contraceptives and most significantly, the health concerns connected with abortion. To sum up the discussion, sex education should be offered in nations like Pakistan where people lack a firm grasp of sex matters. Adults who aren't educated about the importance of sex education are more likely to become infected with sexually transmitted diseases, have unwanted pregnancies, and engage in immoral behaviour in their teens. Sex education should primarily be taught in schools, according to those who wrote the study. Sex education may be permitted in Pakistan, increasing the likelihood of a moral improvement in the country's society. The need of comprehensive sexuality education for teenagers has long been recognised, and previous research have gathered information on the characteristics of effective sexuality education programmes from throughout the world. Numerous publications have clearly described the counter-arguments to the most typical areas of resistance to sexuality education. Additionally, numerous authors have recognised resistance as a significant barrier to the widespread implementation of sexuality education in a variety of settings. It appears that there has been little discussion on particular programmatic initiatives to proactively plan for backlash and respond in a timely and effective manner. Despite the fact that this assessment is confined to Pakistan and the activities of only non-governmental organisations (NGOs), it is a significant addition since opposition to sexuality education has received little attention in the literature. The information for this research was gathered from important informants who gave useful insights. We recognise that the viewpoints of other community groups might be useful in our research. We thank you for your consideration.



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