

Factors Influencing the Integration of Comprehensive Sexuality Education into Educational Systems in Low- And Middle-Income Countries: A Systematic Review

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Abstract : Background: Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) plays a critical role in promoting youth and adolescents' sexual and reproductive health and well-being. However, little is known about the enablers and barriers affecting the integration of CSE into educational programmes. The aim of this review is to explore positive and negative factors influencing the integration of CSE into national curricula and educational systems in low- and middle-income countries. Methods: We conducted a systematic literature review (January 2010 to August 2022). The results accord with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analysis standards for systematic reviews. Data were retrieved from the PubMed, Cochrane, Google Scholar, and Web of Hinari databases. The search yielded 431 publications, of which 23 met the inclusion criteria for full-text screening. The review is guided by an established conceptual framework that incorporates the integration of health innovations into health systems. Data were analyzed using a thematic synthesis approach. Results: The magnitude of the problem is evidenced by sexual and reproductive health challenges such as high teenage pregnancies, early marriages, and sexually transmitted infections. Awareness of these challenges can facilitate the development of interventions and the implementation and integration of CSE. Reported aspects of the interventions include core CSE content, delivery methods, training materials and resources, and various teacher-training factors. Reasons for adoption include perceived benefits of CSE, experiences and characteristics of both teachers and learners, and religious, social, and cultural factors. Broad system characteristics include strengthening links between schools and health facilities, school and community-based collaboration, coordination of CSE implementation, and the monitoring and evaluation of CSE. Ultimately, the availability of resources, national policies and laws, international agendas, and political commitment will impact upon the extent and level of integration. Conclusion: Social, economic, cultural, political, legal, and financial contextual factors influence the implementation and integration of CSE into national curricula and educational systems. Stakeholder collaboration and involvement in the design and appropriateness of interventions is critical.

Keywords : comprehensive sexuality education, factors, integration, sexual reproductive health rights

Conference Title : ICPFRH 2024 : International Conference on Population, Family and Reproductive Health

Conference Location : Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Conference Dates : February 05-06, 2024