

The Implementation of Sexual and Reproductive Health Education Policy in Schools in Asia and Africa: A Scoping Review

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Abstract : Introduction: Adolescent SRH has been neglected since the start of the millennium. Adolescents comprise 16% of the global population, with the largest proportion living in Asia (650 million). By late adolescence, individuals in these regions are likely to become sexually active, and thus they must understand their SRH rights. Many lack knowledge of SRH, using unreliable sources for such information. Sex education is necessary to standardize and inform sexual knowledge, which empowers adolescents to make informed SRH decisions. School is an appropriate environment for this, however, SRH education requires effective policy to enforce. Nonetheless, this issue remains of low political priority in Asia and Africa. Current literature on sex education policy in schools in these regions is scarce and tends to have broad aims. Thus, a scoping review was necessary. Methods: Literature searches were conducted in February 2023 using six databases, including grey literature databases (PubMed, Scopus, Embase, Web of Science, Google Scholar, Global Index Medicus), returning a total of 1537 unique articles. After screening titles, abstracts and full text, 17 articles remained. References of included articles were additionally searched, producing a further 7 articles, which then underwent thematic analysis Results: Most countries in Africa and Asia did not have studies on this topic. Studies derived data from interviews with key stakeholders and quantitative methods quantified questionnaire responses. Barriers were: policy/curriculum issues, societal opinions, teaching discomfort, and lack of educator training. Limitations were insufficient timing, inconsistent implementation, insufficient hours dedicated to teaching, education received late into schooling, and discrepancies between teachers, schools, and students about whether policies were being implemented. Discussion: Based on the existing limited evidence, a cultural shift to reduce stigma seems necessary, alongside teacher and student involvement in policy formulation with effective implementation monitoring and educator training.

Keywords : adolescent, Africa, Asia, education, sexual and reproductive health, policy

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