

Familiarity Towards Sexual Health Education Among Special Educators In Villupuram District

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ABSTRACT: *Sexual health education has always been a controversial topic. Special educators need to start early to educate the intellectually challenged children about sexuality-related issues. Sexual health education helps children with an intellectual disability recognize if someone is trying to take advantage of them so they can recognize inappropriate sexual advances early on, better protect themselves from exploitation and be able to report incidents of suspected sexual abuse. Hence, all the special educators should be aware about sexual health education. The aim of the present study is to understand the Familiarity on Sexual Health Education among Special Educators in Villupuram District. Ninety three special educators were appointed under the scheme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in Villupuram District. A total of 34 special educators were selected from 93 special educators using Simple Random Sampling Method (Lottery Method) for the study. The study found that majority of the special educators are having average level of familiarity on sexual health education and more than one fourth of the special educators are having high level of familiarity on sexual health education. Salient findings and suggestions pertaining to the study are discussed in the full paper.*

Keywords: *Sexual Health Education, Intellectually Challenged Children, Special Educators, Special Education*

1. INTRODUCTION

It is currently accepted that knowledge of sexual issues is beneficial for youth development, and that sexual education should become part of our educational rights (Goldman & Bradley, 2001). Haffner (1992) defines the aim of sexual education is to create a world of responsible people with information and awareness of rights on making sexual choices, without regard to age, gender, socio-economic status, or sexual orientation. According to the Sex Information and Education Council of the US (SIECUS, 1999), the main goals of a comprehensive sexual education program constitute developing and understanding values, attitudes, and beliefs relating to sexuality and help to develop interpersonal skills for healthy relationships. Sexual education is perceived to be not only about sex, but should inform young people about relationships, respect between partners, and the development of strong, well-informed sexual knowledge. Issues related to equity, decision-making, and sexual orientation help

individually evaluate their own values regarding discrimination, and to develop sensitivity and respect for diversity (Çok, 2003).

Sexual health education has always been a controversial topic. Special educators need to start early to educate the intellectually challenged children about sexuality-related issues. Sexual health education helps children with an intellectual disability recognize if someone is trying to take advantage of them so they can recognize inappropriate sexual advances early on, better protect themselves from exploitation and be able to report incidents of suspected sexual abuse. Hence, all the special educators should be aware about sexual health education.

2. REVIEW OF EARLIER STUDIES

Parents of intellectually challenged children experience fear about other people that they might take advantage of their child, thus special educators have greater role in assisting children with intellectual disability in their growth and development, and sexuality is part of that growth. **Sullivan and Knutson (1998)** found that out of all the types of disability, children with intellectual disability are at increased risk for all three forms of abuse (neglect, physical abuse and sexual abuse) compared to those children with other types of disabilities (speech/language disorders, hearing impairments, learning disabilities, health impairments and Attention Deficit Disorder). Children who have intellectually challenged children are significantly more likely to be sexually abused than their normal peers of the same age. (**Sobsey, 1994**).

2.1. SarvaShiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

SarvaShiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is Government of India's flagship programme for achievement of universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) in a time bound manner, as mandated by 86th amendment to the Constitution of India making free and compulsory Education to the Children of 6-14 year age group, a Fundamental Right.

SarvaShiksha Abhiyan also focuses on Children with Special Need (CWSN) and says CWSN include normal schools through integrated and inclusive education. Use the suitable method teaching for CWSN. It include the Open teaching system and Open school, non-formal education, Distance education & learning, Itinerant Teacher, Resource Teacher, Community Based Rehabilitation, vocational and other government programs.

2.2. Aim and objectives of the Study

1.1.1. Aim

The aim of the present study is to understand the Familiarity on Sexual Health Education among Special Educators in Villupuram District.

1.1.2. Objectives

- To describe the Socio-Demographic Profile of the Special Educators
- To measure the Familiarity on Sexual Health Education among Special Educators
- To analyse the association between Interest towards teaching sex education of the Teachers and their level of Familiarity on Sexual Health Education.
- To analyse the difference between Male and Female gender of the Teachers and their level of Familiarity on Sexual Health Education.
- To provide suitable Suggestions based on the Findings.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Villupuram District and the researcher adopted Descriptive Research Design. Ninety three special educators were appointed under the scheme of SarvaShiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in Villupuram District. A total of 34 special educators were selected from 93 special educators using Simple Random Sampling Method (Lottery Method) for the study. A tool to measure the Knowledge on Sexual Health Education prepared by Venkat Lakshmi and Navyas was applied by the authors to measure the Level of Familiarity on Sexual Health Education.

Hypotheses

- There is a significant association between Interest towards teaching sex education among special educators and their level of Familiarity on Sexual Health Education.
- There is a significant difference between male and female special educators with regard to their Overall familiarity on Sexual Health Education.

4. RESULTS

Table 1: Socio demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variables	No. of Respondents (No.34)	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	16	47.1
Female	18	52.9
<i>Age</i>		
Below 30	9	26.5
31 – 40	20	58.8
Above 41	5	14.7
<i>Domicile</i>		
Urban	7	20.6
Rural	27	79.4
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Married	31	91.2
Single	3	8.8
<i>Type of Family</i>		
Joint Family	2	5.9
Nuclear Family	32	94.1
<i>Teaching Experience</i>		
Below 5 yrs	4	11.8
6 – 10 yrs	14	41.2
Above 11 yrs	16	47.0

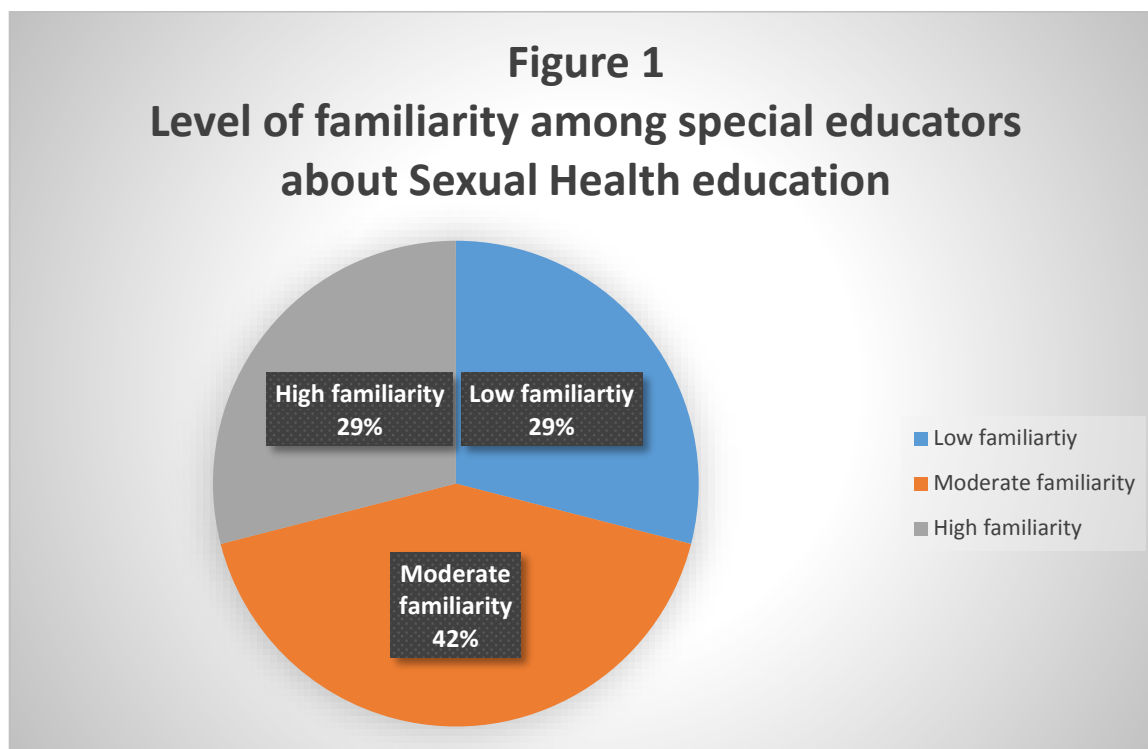


Fig. 1: Level of Familiarity

The above figure shows that, less than half (42%) of the special educators are having average level of Familiarity on sexual health education, more than one fourth (29%) them are having low level of Familiarity and more than one fourth (29%) of the special educators are having high level of Familiarity on sexual health education.

Table 2: Difference between Male and Female special educators with regard to their Familiarity on Sexual Health Education

Variable	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	Statistical Inference
Knowledge	Male (n.16)	2.00	0.730	t = 0.434 df = 32 p > 0.05 (NS)
	Female (n.18)	1.89	0.758	

't' test was applied to find out the difference between male and female special educators with regard to their Familiarity on sexual health education. The 't' value is 0.434 and significant level is greater than 0.05. Hence, there is no significant difference between male and female gender towards their level of Familiarity on sexual health education.

Table 3: Association between Special Educators' Level of Interest towards Teaching Sex Education and their Level of Familiarity on Sexual Health Education

S. No.	Level of Interest towards SHE	Level of Familiarity			Statistical Inference
		Low (n:10)	Moderate(n:14)	High(n:10)	
1	Low	5	6	5	$\chi^2 = 18.189$ df = 6 P < 0.01
2	High	5	8	5	

					Highly Significant
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The researcher applied Chi-square test to find out the association between Interest towards teaching sex education of the Teachers and their level of Familiarity on Sexual Health Education. The result shows that there is a significant association between Interest towards teaching sex education of the Teachers and their level of Familiarity on Sexual Health Education.

5. SUGGESTIONS

At the end of the study the authors suggests that all the special educators should be aware about sexual health education and take efforts to improve their level of familiarity on sexual health education. Teachers should be confident and competent to handle the sensitive issues implicit within sexual education. A comfortable environment should exist to make it easier to discuss personal aspects without feeling threatened by various pressures both for the teacher and the pupil (Kakavoulis & Forrest, 1999).

6. CONCLUSION

The present study has documented the familiarity on sexual health education among teachers of intellectually challenged children. The study found that majority of the special educators are having average and low level of familiarity on sexual health education and only less than one third of the special educators are having high level of familiarity on sexual health education. The study also revealed that, there is no significant difference between male and female gender of the special educators and their familiarity on sexual health education. Sexuality education should help special educators to reflect critically on their own social and sexual values, attitudes and understanding that they have already attained and perform in their everyday life.

7. REFERENCES

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