

Public School Teachers' Readiness and Awareness Toward Comprehensive Sexuality Education

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Abstract — Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) is a program designed to develop a consistent comprehension of essential principles and themes to assure the unambiguous implementation of sexuality education protocols in schools, requiring the teachers' readiness and awareness of the program for its successful and effective implementation. This study aimed to assess the level of readiness and awareness of public school teachers toward CSE in District III, DepEd Malaybalay City Division, Region X. Utilizing the descriptive correlational research design, the researcher used a researcher-made survey questionnaire to gather pertinent data for the study. The findings reveal that the public school teachers are predominantly in their late 30s and early 40s, female, married, holding Teacher III positions, many holding Master's Degrees, have 11 years of significant teaching experience, mostly handling Grade 9 students, and have participated in division-level training on CSE. They possess above-average levels of readiness and awareness in all areas, indicating that the public school teachers are not only capable but also motivated to engage with CSE and have a higher-than-expected understanding and awareness of the program. It was also found that the teachers' readiness for the implementation of CSE is significantly influenced by educational attainment and professional training and their awareness is significantly influenced by factors like educational attainment, relevant training attended, gender, and civil status. Also, the teachers' readiness and awareness are significantly related, indicating that those who possess a comprehensive understanding of CSE are better equipped and more confident in delivering the program effectively. These findings imply that education authorities should prioritize equitable CSE training, encourage advanced studies, and address gender and cultural sensitivities to equip all teachers effectively. With this, the researcher recommends that education authorities consider the proposed program of activities that would enhance and sustain the readiness and awareness of public school teachers toward CSE.

Keywords — *Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), Teacher Readiness, Awareness, Educational Attainment, Professional Training, Gender Disparities, Cultural Sensitivities*

I. Introduction

“The foundation of every state is the education of its youth.”

Diogenes

Education serves as a keystone of societal progress, molding the future by arming the youth with the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to confront various life challenges. Diogenes' words above are a sentiment that accentuates the critical role of

comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in advancing informed, responsible, and empowered youth as citizens of the country. Consequently, knowledgeable, accountable, and vested youth through CSE are perceived to be contributing to the country's overall advancement in the coming days.

To paint a vivid background about CSE, it has evolved primarily from being an HIV prevention, population control, or reproduction education intervention program into an all-encompassing, holistic, age-appropriate, multidimensional learning process that occurs over several years. Eventually, it has attracted accumulating curiosity and attention in the previous decades. Young people themselves, all at once, are progressively demanding their rights to CSE (Cense, et al., 2020; UNFPA, et al., 2020).

As a learning process, CSE enables the youth to make healthy, gradual, and respectful decisions about their sexuality and relationships. CSE is a form of transformative education that principally empowers children and adolescents to develop their knowledge and skills so they can deal with serious aspects of their health and development while their bodies undergo growth and maturity and in due course transition to adulthood. When CSE is delivered well, it can inculcate positive and desirable behaviors and values, including such personal and social competencies as critical thinking, risk assessment, and the ability to contemplate various standpoints. CSE, in this manner, equips young learners to not only avoid undesirable health outcomes but also enjoy encouraging and healthy sexual and social relationships, enabling them to thrive both today and in the years to come.

Literature Review

Various explanations of CSE have been discussed in multifarious books, journals, and even online articles. Defining CSE provides valuable insights into a deeper understanding of the topic and its significance in molding the young people nowadays. According to UNESCO (2017), CSE is a curriculum-based teaching-learning process about the cognitive emotional, physical, and social aspects of sexuality. Its aim is to equip children and young people with knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that will empower them to: 1) realize their health, well-being, and dignity; 2) develop respectful social and sexual relationships; 3) consider how their choices and decisions affect their own well-being and that of others around them; and, 4) understand and ensure the protection of their rights through their lives (UNESCO, 2017).

The WHO defines CSE as an avenue that provides the young people with accurate, age-appropriate information about sexuality and their sexual and reproductive health, which is considered critical for their health and survival (WHO, 2023).

Rollston et al. (2020) defines CSE as sex education instruction method based on a curriculum that aims to provide students the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and values to make appropriate and healthy decisions in their sexual lives. The purpose is that this comprehension will help prevent students from contracting STIs such as HIV and HPV, reduce unplanned and

unwanted pregnancies, as well as lowering rates of domestic and sexual violence (Rollston, et al., 2020).

Planned Parenthood (2024) also defines CSE as a comprehensive approach to sexuality education that aims to provide young people with accurate, age-appropriate information about sexuality, and sexual and reproductive health, and relationship. It is grounded on the understanding that sexuality is a fundamental aspect of human development and well-being (Planned Parenthood, 2024).

II. Methodology

This study aimed to determine the level of readiness and awareness of the public school teachers towards CSE in District III, DepEd Malaybalay City Division, Region X. In order to quantitatively assess the public school teachers' levels of readiness and awareness towards CSE concepts, content, and pedagogical approaches, alongside their self-reported readiness to implement such programs in their classrooms, a descriptive correlational research design was used. According to Creswell (2014), the descriptive-correlational research design describes individual variables and determines the relationships or correlations between two or more variables in a natural setting, without the researcher manipulating any of the variables. In this study, the descriptive-correlational design was appropriate because it described the characteristics of the public school teachers in terms of their demographic profile, the levels of their readiness and awareness towards CSE, and measured the relationship among these variables.

Furthermore, through the examination of the correlation between readiness and awareness, this current investigation sought to identify potential gaps that may hinder the implementation of CSE in schools.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the existing literature on teacher preparedness in sexuality education, highlighting areas where professional development may be necessary to enhance both awareness and readiness (UNESCO, 2018). Through the identification of the correlation between these two dimensions, the research aims to inform educational policymakers and training programs, ultimately improving the effectiveness of CSE delivery in public schools.

III. Results and Discussion

Demographic Profile of the Public School Teachers

Age. There are two hundred fifty-six (256) public school teachers in this study. Ninety-eight (38.28%) ranged from 34-40 years old, fifty-nine (23.05%) ranged from 41-47 years old, forty-five (17.58%) ranged from 27-33 years old, thirty-three (12.89%) ranged from 48-54 years

old, and only twenty-one (8.20%) ranged from 55-62 years old. This means that most of the public school teachers' age ranged from 34-40 years old. The data shows a significant concentration of teachers in their late 30s and early 40s, suggesting a relatively young and mid-career workforce within the public school system. In contrast, there is a smaller representation of older teachers. This distribution indicates a dynamic and possibly more adaptable teaching force, which could have implications for the teachers' readiness and awareness towards comprehensive sexuality education, potentially reflecting varying levels of experience and familiarity with contemporary educational trends.

Gender. Out of two hundred fifty six (256) public school teachers, one hundred sixty-eight (65.63%) were female, while only eighty-eight (34.38%) percent were male. This means that most of the respondents were female. Since female teachers constitute the majority, it is possible that their perspectives and approaches to teaching Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) are more prevalent, potentially reflecting a greater level of comfort or openness in addressing topics related to sexual health, gender equality, and relationships. However, this gender imbalance may also highlight the need for greater inclusivity and awareness among male teachers, whose smaller representation could impact the breadth of teaching styles and insights regarding CSE. The overall gender dynamics could play a role in how prepared and knowledgeable teachers are about CSE, influencing the effectiveness of its implementation in schools.

Civil Status. Of two hundred fifty-six (256) public school teachers, there were two hundred five (83.98%) married, thirty-one (12.11%) single, six (2.34%) separated, and only four widowed. This means that most of the public school teachers were married. This significant proportion of married teachers may suggest a more stable personal life, which could potentially influence their readiness and awareness towards Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE). Married teachers may bring different perspectives on family life, relationships, and sexual health education, potentially enriching the delivery of CSE in schools. However, it is important to note that the experiences and views of single, separated, and widowed teachers could also contribute valuable insights into the comprehensive approach to sexuality education, particularly in areas like personal relationships, diverse family structures, and sexual health challenges. The overall civil status of the teachers could affect their attitudes toward CSE, which might influence the effectiveness of its implementation.

Grade Level Handled. There were two hundred fifty six (256) public school teachers included in this study. Forty-eight (18.75%) handled Grade 9, forty-four (17.19%) handled Grade 8, forty-three (16.80%) handled Grade 10, forty-two (16.41%) handled Grade 12, forty-one (16.02%) handled Grade 11, and only thirty-eight (14.84%) handled Grade 7. This means that most of the public school teachers handled Grade 9. This suggests that a significant portion of teachers in this study are involved with students in their adolescent years, a critical period for implementing Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE). Given that CSE is most relevant during the teenage years, particularly in Grades 7 to 12, these teachers are likely to play a key role in shaping students'

understanding of sexual health, relationships, and personal development. The high representation of teachers in these grade levels indicates that they may be more directly engaged with the core issues surrounding CSE and may have a heightened awareness of its importance in addressing the specific needs and challenges faced by students during adolescence.

Table 7

Highest Educational Attainment.

There were two hundred fifty six (256) public school teachers included in this study. One hundred two (39.84%) had Master's Degree, fifty-four (21.09%) had Master's Degree-CAR, forty-four (17.19%) had Master's Degree-Units, thirty-one (12.11%) had Bachelor's Degree, eleven (4.30%) had Doctorate-Units, nine (3.52%) had Doctorate Degree-CAR, and only five had Doctorate Degree. This means that most of the public school teachers had Masters Degree. This suggests a highly educated teacher workforce, with advanced degrees likely contributing to a higher level of awareness and preparedness for addressing topics such as Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE). Teachers with Master's Degrees, in particular, may possess deeper knowledge and training in educational strategies, which could enhance their ability to effectively teach CSE. However, the small proportion of teachers with Doctorate Degrees suggests that while most teachers are well-educated, fewer have reached the highest levels of academic achievement, which could influence their approach to complex topics like sexuality education. Overall, the academic background of these teachers indicates that many are equipped with the necessary expertise to implement and engage with CSE, although further professional development may be needed to strengthen their

Current Position.

Out of two hundred fifty-six (256) public school teachers, there were one hundred fifty-two (59.38%) Teacher III, forty-three (16.80%) Teacher I, twenty-four (9.38%) Master Teacher II, nineteen (7.42%) Master Teacher II, ten (3.91%) Teacher II, five (1.95%) Master Teacher III, and only three (1.17%) Master Teacher IV. This means that most of the public school teachers were Teacher III. The predominance of Teacher III among the respondents suggests that most teachers are at a mid-career level, which could influence their readiness and awareness toward Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE). Teachers in this position may have a solid understanding of curriculum implementation and classroom management, making them well-suited to integrate CSE into their teaching. However, the relatively small representation of higher-ranking teachers, such as Master Teachers, could imply a need for more leadership and mentoring in guiding the implementation of CSE across schools. Overall, while the majority of teachers may have the experience needed for CSE, ongoing professional development and support from senior-level educators may be necessary to ensure a consistent and effective approach to teaching sexual education.

Length of Service.

There were two hundred fifty-six (256) public school teachers included in this study. Ninety-eight (38.28%) had 11> years of service, eighty-nine (34.77%) had 6-10 years of service, and only sixty-nine (26.95%) had 1-5 years of service. This means that most of the public school teachers had 11> years of service. This suggests that most teachers in the study are experienced, which may positively influence their readiness and awareness towards CSE. Teachers with over 11 years of service likely have a deep understanding of curriculum development, teaching strategies, and student needs, which could contribute to a more effective delivery of CSE. However, the mix of newer teachers with 1-5 years of experience indicates that there may be a need for additional support and training to ensure all teachers, regardless of experience, are fully prepared and confident in teaching CSE. The varying lengths of service could also lead to diverse approaches and levels of enthusiasm towards integrating sexuality education into the classroom.

Relevant trainings/ seminars attended. Out of two hundred fifty-six (256) public school teachers, there were ninety-eight (38.28%) had attended in division level, eighty-three (32.42%) in national level, forty-four (17.19%) in regional level, and only thirty-one (12.11%) in international level. This means that most of the respondents had attended in division level. This suggests that most teachers have had access to professional development opportunities within their local or national contexts, which may provide them with relevant knowledge and skills for teaching CSE. Division-level training may be particularly beneficial in aligning CSE content with regional educational policies and priorities. However, the lower participation in international and regional training may indicate missed opportunities for exposure to global best practices or broader educational trends in sexuality education. The distribution highlights the need for more widespread and varied professional development opportunities to ensure teachers are fully equipped with diverse, up-to-date resources and strategies for effectively teaching CSE.

DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Profile of the Public School Teachers

The profile of public schools in District III, DepEd Malaybalay City Division presents several key variables that have significant implications for their readiness and awareness about CSE. Firstly, the age distribution of public-school teachers indicates a dynamic and possibly more adaptable teaching force. Given their professional development stage, teachers in their late 30s and early 40s are generally considered dynamic and open to new ideas. Studies have shown that younger mid-career teachers tend to be more adaptable and willing to integrate innovative teaching approaches (Hanushek et al., 2019). Possibly, this can influence their readiness for implementing CSE as they are more likely to align with contemporary trends in education highlighting inclusivity and holistic learning. Likewise, teachers within this age range are likely to have been exposed to evolving educational policies, including CSE, during their training or professional development. Their familiarity with these CSE policies may lead to a greater awareness of the importance of

addressing sexuality education comprehensively. As pointed out by UNESCO (2018), teachers who have received more recent training are better equipped to handle sensitive topics such as CSE in the sense that they are often exposed to updated methodologies and cultural considerations in teaching. On the other hand, although these teachers may be open to new ideas, their mid-career status implies they might not have the extensive classroom experiences of older teachers. A study by Darling-Hammond et al., (2017) emphasizes that teaching experience significantly affects confidence and ability to handle complex classroom discussions such as those involving CSE. As such, while younger teachers may show enthusiasm for CSE, they might require additional support or training to ensure effective implementation. Additionally, this demographic offers an ideal group for targeted professional development initiatives. Mid-career teachers are typically in a phase of active professional group which makes them more receptive to capacity-building programs that develop their knowledge and skills in delivering CSE. Research-based evidence from the World Bank (2019) suggests that teachers at this career stage benefit significantly from professional development tailored to contemporary challenges in education. The smaller representation of older teachers suggests fewer traditional views that could hinder the implementation of CSE. Research by Goldfarb and Lieberman (2021) suggests that younger mid-career teachers are generally more supportive of inclusive approaches to sexuality education which reflects broader societal shifts toward open discussions on sexual health.

Secondly, the significant gender imbalance among public school teachers has several implications for the implementation of CSE which shapes the perspectives, approaches, and overall effectiveness of the program within the schools. The predominance of female teachers may lead to a greater emphasis on female-centric perspectives and experiences in CSE. Research suggests that female teachers are more likely to incorporate feminist perspectives and address issues of gender equality in their teaching (Acker, 2014). This could potentially result in a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to CSE, addressing topics such as consent, healthy relationships, and reproductive health from a wider perspective. Additionally, the underrepresentation of male teachers in CSE raises concerns about the potential for limited perspectives and insufficient inclusivity in teaching styles and approaches. Studies have emphasized the importance of male role models in promoting positive attitudes towards gender equality and healthy relationships (Connell, 2014). Last of all, the gender imbalance could also contribute to potential biases in the selection of CSE curriculum materials and the delivery of instruction. Research has shown that educational materials often reflect gender stereotypes and may not adequately address the needs and experiences of all students (Holland & Ainley, 2014). It is crucial to ensure that CSE curriculum and teaching practices are inclusive and address the diverse needs and perspectives of all students regardless of gender.

Thirdly, the high proportion of married teachers has several implications for their readiness and awareness regarding CSE as this demographic may influence their perspectives, approaches, and the overall effectiveness of CSE implementation in schools. The significant number of married teachers could bring a wealth of experience and diverse perspectives on family life, relationships,

and the challenges encountered by married couples and families. Research indicates that teachers' experiences significantly shape their teaching practices and their ability to connect with students (Darling-Hammond, 2014). Married teachers may offer unique insights into family dynamics, communication within relationships, and the complexities of managing varied family structures which could potentially enrich the delivery of CSE in the classroom. Nonetheless, while married teachers may offer valuable perspectives, it is still crucial to acknowledge that the experiences of single, separated, and widowed teachers also provide valuable insights. According to research by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (2016) a comprehensive approach to CSE must be inclusive of diverse family structures and life experiences as ignoring the perspectives of single, separated, or widowed teachers could result in a less comprehensive and potentially less relatable CSE curriculum. Likewise, marital status may indirectly influence attitudes towards sexuality and sexual health education. Research suggests that personal beliefs and experiences can shape teachers' comfort levels in discussing sensitive topics (UNESCO, 2018). While married teachers may bring valuable perspectives, it is vital to ensure that all teachers receive adequate professional development to address any potential biases or discomfort in teaching CSE, regardless of marital status.

IV. Conclusion

With a predominantly female, married, and mid-career workforce, many holding Master's Degrees, in their their late 30s and early 40s, holding Teacher III position, and 11 years of significant teaching experience, the public school teachers involved in the study are well-placed to address the unique challenges of delivering CSE to adolescent students specifically in critical grade levels like Grade 9. Their advanced educational attainment and experience suggest a strong foundation in curriculum implementation and classroom management, though the limited number of senior-level teachers indicates a need for mentorship and leadership in guiding CSE practices. Also, the prevalence of division-level training participation of the public school teacher suggests the importance of localized professional development programs, but the insufficiency of exposure to international and broader trends indicates missed opportunities for the public school teachers to adopt innovative strategies and global best practices. For them to maximize their potentialities, efforts should focus on broadening access to varied training opportunities, motivating advanced education, and providing custom-made support to address varying levels of experience and perspectives within this active teaching workforce.

In addition, the public school teachers have above-average readiness in all of these areas - knowledge of CSE, attitudes toward CSE, institutional support for implementation, personal readiness, and perceived barriers to implementation – which reflects a robust foundation for the successful and effective implementation of CSE. It further indicates that the public school teachers are not only capable but also motivated to engage with CSE, supported by their knowledge, institutional support, and personal confidence. In like manner, the public school teachers possess

an above-average awareness in terms of knowledge of sexuality education content, perceptions of CSE, accessibility of sexuality education resources, attitudes towards sexual health discussions, and impact of CSE. This suggests that public school teachers have a higher-than-expected understanding and awareness of CSE, including its content, the importance and impact of CSE, positive perceptions and attitudes toward discussing sexual health, and adequate access to resources needed for its successful implementation in schools. However, continued support, professional development, policymaking and implementation, and resource provision may still be necessitated to sustain and further enhance their readiness and awareness toward CSE.

The public school teachers' readiness for the implementation of CSE is significantly influenced by educational attainment and professional training whereas factors such as age, position, and years of service have minimal impact. Those teachers who have advanced degrees and those who have participated in targeted training programs demonstrate greater readiness which highlights the importance of investing in higher education and continuous professional development to improve their preparedness. Contrarily, the lack of correlation with seniority underlines the necessity for equitable access to training opportunities for all teachers, irrespective of their career stage. Such custom-made support as foundational training for junior teachers and advanced workshops for senior ones are crucial to address the diverse needs and ensure the consistence readiness across the workforce in schools. Furthermore, factors such as educational attainment, relevant training attended, gender, and civil status significantly influence awareness, indicating the importance of investing in professional development and promoting advanced education to improve teachers' knowledge and confidence. Meanwhile, the lack of correlation with age, position, and years of service indicates that awareness is not inherently linked to experience or seniority but to the quality and relevance of training and education received. Also, the strong, positive, and highly significant relationship between readiness and awareness demonstrates that teachers who possess a comprehensive understanding of CSE, including its content, perceptions, accessibility to resources, and attitudes, are better equipped and more confident in delivering the program effectively. Thus, educational stakeholders should prioritize equitable access to tailored professional development training programs, encourage advanced studies, and address potential gender disparities to ensure that all public school teachers, irrespective of their background or tenure, are well-equipped to effectively deliver CSE in schools.

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