



Implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education Policy in Public Elementary Schools in One District Camarines Norte, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is a curriculum that aims to teach young learners with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to have a better view about sexuality and healthy relationships. It promotes safe, reliable, non-judgmental, and effective sexuality education by using age and developmentally appropriate information, learning strategies, teaching methods, and materials. This research determined the level of implementation of the policy aims of CSE in Labo West District and the level of knowledge of teachers on the said policy. The researchers designed questionnaire to collect these data. The aforementioned data were analyzed using weighted mean and Pearson r to establish the correlation between the two variables. The study further discusses the mechanism of the district to instill awareness on sexuality education among learners to decrease health risk behaviors among young children.

Keywords:

sexuality education;
healthy relationships

INTRODUCTION

Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System of the Philippine Statistic Authority in 2019 reported that there are 180,916 live births among adolescents aged 10 to 19. Only three percent out of these childbirths are fathered by men of the same age group, leaving the rest, as possible results of "coercion and unequal power relations between girls and older men" (United Nations Population Fund Philippines, 2020). The current situation of increasing pregnancies impelled former President Rodrigo Duterte in 2021 to declare the prevention of teenage pregnancies as a "national priority" accompanied by the issuance of Executive Order 141, which highlighted the need to implement measures that will attend to the underlying cause of the increasing number of pregnancies among young children. Also, all government agencies and instruments were directed to identify and implement practicable interventions to prevent all known causes of early pregnancies.

Department of Education (DepEd) is dedicated in delivering and safeguarding the right of Filipino learners towards good education and improved health so that the learners can finish basic education free from health concerns. DepEd, through its school system, acknowledges its roles and responsibilities in giving the learners their right to good health through its function as forerunner in the implementation of DepEd Order No. 31, s. 2018 otherwise known as the Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE).

Many young learners receive confusing and diverging information about sexuality in their transition from childhood to adolescence. According to research,



most of this information were from friends, mothers and media. The demand for accurate, reliable, and non-judgmental information for young learners is truly necessary at this age and time. The absence of scientific, age-and-developmentally appropriate, cultural and gender responsive education may leave young children susceptible to sexual abuse and exploitations. Correspondingly, sex education is thus required to go beyond education on risks, danger, and disease and be sex-positive and rights-based (Hirst, 2012; Ingham & Hirst, 2010). CSE responds to this demand. The said DepEd order is primarily committed in promoting and protecting the rights of learners to health education, information and care, enabling the learners in becoming responsible and empowered young people who were able to use critical thinking in relation to risky behaviors that leads to poor reproductive health outcomes.

In Bicol region, the youngest cases of early pregnancy were a 10-years-old child and four 11-years-old children as revealed by the Population Commission (POPCOM, 2019). One of those five young mothers is from the province of Camarines Norte. The rising incidences of early and unwanted pregnancies and sexual violence among children at their early age served as the driving force for the researchers to choose the study. Examining the level of implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Labo West District, Camarines Norte and the knowledge of teachers regarding the policy is significant to see if the learners in the district were provided with enough information and understanding about sexuality education that will help them in creating decisions on their health and well-being and will not be victimized of early pregnancies and sexual abuse.

METHOD

The study utilized the descriptive correlational research method. The descriptive method described the level of implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education Policy in Labo West District and how knowledgeable the public-school teachers there on the said policy. The correlational method was employed to explore causal relationship between the two variables and to sustain or upgrade the policy recommendations.

The respondents were composed of Guidance teacher-designates in every school of Labo West District, Labo, Camarines Norte, Philippines. A total of twenty-five (25) respondents were used in this study.

The instrument utilized in gathering the data was a structured researchers-made questionnaire. It consisted of survey questions that identifies the level of implementation and extent of knowledge of teachers on Comprehensive Sexuality Education Policy in Labo West District. A total of 40 questions were included in this study. The questionnaire was first presented to the researcher's professor for remarks and recommendations and validated by guidance teacher-designates from other district. Further modifications of the questionnaire were made including converting it on google form. Reliability was also tested before the distribution of the questionnaire online. The questionnaires were disseminated via link send through messenger application.





Researchers employed weighted mean to determine the level of implementation and the extent of knowledge of teachers on Comprehensive Sexuality Education Policy. It was interpreted using the following scale:

Scale	Numerical Rating	Descriptive Rating	
		Level of implementation of CSE Policy	Knowledge of teacher on CSE Policy
3.50 – 4.00	4	Very Much Implemented (VMI)	Very Much Knowledgeable (VMK)
2.50 – 3.49	3	Much Implemented (MI)	Much Knowledgeable (MK)
1.50 – 2.49	2	Fairly Implemented (FI)	Fairly Knowledgeable (FK)
1.00 – 1.49	1	Not at all (NA)	Not at all (NA)

On the other hand, the researchers made use of Pearson r to establish the correlation of the two variables. The researchers sent a letter of approval to the Public Schools District Supervisor of Labo West District to be able to conduct the survey in the said district to guidance teachers-designates. A copy of the approved letter and the link for survey form was sent to each identified respondents online for ease of distribution and retrieval.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The eight policy aims of Comprehensive Sexuality Education are described in Table 2 and the 25 respondents were asked to gauge their schools' level of implementation in the said policies. A closer look at the table shows that the 8-item indicators had an average of 3.34, interpreted as "Much Implemented".

TABLE: I

Indicator	Average Mean	Interpretation
1. Enhancing Overall Wellness of Learners	3.33	MI
2. Contributing to Better Learning Outcomes	3.61	VMI
3. Ensuring accessible information and health care education	2.89	MI
4. Promoting healthy and responsible sexual and social behavior	3.55	VMI
5. Addressing reproductive health concerns of children	3.33	MI
6. Developing mature and responsible children	3.47	MI
7. Providing teachers with resource materials on life skills	3.12	MI
8. Enabling teachers to integrate reproductive health concerns across curriculum	3.40	MI
TOTAL	3.34	MI

Table 1 revealed that two indicators attained an interpretation of "Very Much Implemented" among the policies, which are "Contributing to Better Learning Outcomes" and "Promoting healthy and responsible sexual and social behaviour". The schools in Labo West District adopted CSE as a means to prevent dropouts in their school due to health risk behaviours. Moreover, the schools also put-up school programs against labelling the sexuality of others (name calling) and using it to pick on them through inclusion in the lesson content. In the study of Berlan et. al. (2010), it was publicised that gays, lesbian and bisexual were more likely to be bullied



compared to heterosexual ones so the schools in the district were taking early precaution actions on it.

It is notable as well that the rest of the policies received a weighted mean which are interpreted as “Much Evident”. The lowest weighted mean goes to “Ensuring accessible information and health care education” and “Providing teachers with resource materials”. The result connotes that the teachers and learners need more resource materials like storybooks, booklets, modules, lesson exemplars and videos to guide them in teaching and learning sexuality education and life skills coupled with it.

TABLE: 2

Indicator	Average Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1.Enhancing Overall Wellness of Learners	3.30	Much Knowledgeable (MK)
2.Contributing to Better Learning Outcomes	3.62	Very Much Knowledgeable (VMK)
3.Ensuring accessible information and health care education	2.93	Much Knowledgeable (MK)
4.Promoting healthy and responsible sexual and social behaviour	3.54	Very Much Knowledgeable (VMK)
5. Addressing reproductive health concerns of children	3.34	Much Knowledgeable (MK)
6. Developing mature and responsible children	3.53	Very Much Knowledgeable (VMK)
7. Providing teachers with resource materials on life skills	3.19	Much Knowledgeable (MK)
8. Enabling teachers to integrate reproductive health concerns across curriculum	3.46	Much Knowledgeable (MK)
TOTAL	3.36	MI

On the other hand, Table 2 disclosed how knowledgeable the public-school teachers in Labo West District on the CSE policy aims. In the study of **Olufadiwa** et al (2021), they pointed out the the importance of teachers for the delivery of an effective school-based sexuality education cannot be underemphasized as it has been found in several studies that students prefer teachers to teach sexuality education. Teachers are the effective individual who can be able to build on knowledge, skills, and behaviours, thus enabling young people to make responsible and safe choices.

Based on the ratings given by the teachers, they are well-informed about the CSE policy particularly on indicator 2, “Contributing to Better Learning Outcomes” followed by “Promoting Healthy and Responsible Sexual and Social Behaviour” among learners within the schools, both with the ratings of VMK. Most teacher-respondents cited that they made use of learner-centered approach with participatory learning activities during their teaching of sexuality education that helped significantly in the learning outcomes of the learners. The teachers also added that they allow the students to express freely their gender orientation on the conducts on their projects, tasks, and performance.

However, the table also showed that indicator 3 which is “Ensuring Accessible Information and Health Care Education” and indicator 7 which is “Providing Teachers with Resource Materials on Life Skills” were rated the lowest among the indicators, but both were still rated as MK. This revealed that the teachers need help





in linking their learners to credible, online and/or printed sexuality educational resources. Also, the quantity of available reading materials related in sexuality education from the school library or classroom's reading nook where learners can read them was also among the concern cited by the teachers.

TABLE: 3

Correlations			
		Level of Implementation	Knowledge of Teacher
Level of Implementation	Pearson Correlation	1	.974**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	40	40
Knowledge of Teacher	Pearson Correlation	.974**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	40	40
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the linear relationship between the level of implementation and the knowledge of public elementary school teachers in Labo West District on the Comprehensive Sexuality Education Policy. Table 3 showed that there was a positive correlation between the two variables, $r(39) = .974^{**}$, $p = .000$. This manifestation clearly asserts that the thorough implementation of CSE in the different schools in Labo West District as prompted by DepEd Order No. 31, s. 2018 helped the teachers in becoming more cognizant of the policy which resulted to better learning outcomes in the part of the learners. One among the relevant programs implemented in the district that brought this outcome is the inclusion of CSE in the school-based learning action cell (SLAC). This activity addressed the gray areas of the teachers on the integration of CSE in the curriculum significantly. As cited by Wilson (2016), positive school reforms can only occur through professional learning community (PLC) such as the SLAC model. Other than this, most of the schools of the district also added CSE programs and projects in their school improvement plan (SIP) and conducted information dissemination through assemblies with learners and parents that leads to the result. Nevertheless, it can also be noted that the problem in the reliable resource materials during the implementation of CSE somehow affects the teachers in their delivery of the policy to their learners.

CONCLUSION

This research aims to identify the level of implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Labo West District and the level of knowledge of the teachers on the said policy. Based from the result, the policy aims of CSE were much implemented in the district and the teachers are much knowledgeable in the policy. In addition, a positive correlation between the two variables were established. Most of the respondents agreed that the implementation of the policy resulted in a better



learning outcome among the learners as it serves as a proactive prevention against drop-outs caused by health risk behaviours. Bullying where sexuality or gender is used as a weapon against another, physical or nonphysical, was also barred in most of the schools in the district as part of the implementation of CSE. Many teachers also allow free expression of their sexuality in regards of school works, diminishing stereotypes. Gradually, the teachers had become more acquainted of the policy through the SLAC sessions of their respective schools where CSE was part of the training matrix. Nevertheless, the need for more reliable resource materials, printed or online, is requested by most of the schools and teachers so that the implementation will be more effective.

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