

Attitude Towards Sex Education: A Study among Parents of Middle School Students in Aizawl City

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Abstract

The primary goal of sex education is promotion of sexual and reproductive health. Provision of opportunity to develop and understand values, attitudes and insights about sexuality and developing relationship and interpersonal skills is another goal of sex education. The purpose of this study is to measure the attitude towards sex education among parents of middle school students in Aizawl City with respect to their gender and their occupation. 200 parents (100 male and 100 female parents) of middle school students in Aizawl City were included in the sample. "Attitude scale towards sex education" developed by DR (Smt.) Usha Mishra was employed. Findings show that majority of parents have positive attitude towards sex education. The study also revealed that there are no significant differences in the attitude towards sex education among parents of middle school students with respect to gender or occupation.

Keywords: *Attitude, Sex education, Middle school students.*

Introduction

Children and teens are exposed to sex every day through movies, television, advertisements, magazines, and the internet (Mandigo, 2020). Sex refers to the biological characteristics that lead to the assignment of either 'male' or 'female'.

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Sexuality, on the other hand, refers to a person's capacity for sexual feelings. Sex education can be provided as part of school programs, public health campaigns, or by parents or caregivers. It is a comprehensive set of knowledge and the process of learning the emotional, physical, and social aspects of sexuality. Effective sex education should include information about puberty, menstruation, contraceptives, condoms, sexual violence prevention, sexual orientation, gender identity, and body image. Sex education equips people with the information and skills they need to make the best decisions for themselves about sex and relationships. Many parents find discussing sexuality and reproduction with their children overwhelming, but there are books available that address sexuality for different age groups (Gallao et al., 2020). The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) recommends comprehensive sexuality education, as it enables young people to make informed decisions about their sexuality (UNFPA, 2020).

Mandigo (2020) emphasized that “comprehensive sex education helps young people develop a positive view of sexuality and provides them with the knowledge and skills they need to make healthy decisions throughout their lives.”

Parents are the primary guides for their children from birth, and they are entitled to teach them the basic sex education they need, continuing to provide accurate information as they grow. If parents are unsure or unaware of what to teach, they can seek help from books, the internet, or videos (Gallao et al., 2020). Teaching boys and girls together may foster mutual trust and empathy, though it can be uncomfortable for kids to discuss these issues in front of the opposite gender. The fundamental aim of sex education is to help children emotionally, physically, and mentally. A comprehensive knowledge base benefits not only themselves but others as well. Children need to understand the importance of their health, dignity, and respecting others. Healthy and respectful sexual relationships enhance the quality of life. There is no set age to begin sex education, as changes occur as a child grows. Therefore, starting early and continuing sex education as the child matures is the right approach.

Middle school, covering classes 5 to 8, is a critical transition period between primary and high school education. It is marked by extraordinary changes, with developmental and intellectual shifts that will not be duplicated in the child's lifetime. The peer group becomes increasingly important, while the influence of parents diminishes. There is a growing need for and ability to handle independence (Sell et al., 2021). Middle schoolers are highly sensitive and self-conscious about their bodies, leading to an increased interest in the opposite gender. Their emotions and relationships are often extreme, swinging between total elation and depression. They are academically engaged during this period and curious about the world around them.

Rationale of the Study

There have been many cases of sex related diseases around the world especially among young people. The term sex has been considered as taboo in many households across India. Due to this, there are many young boys and girls ignorant about psychological and physiological changes that take place in them as a part of growing up. When confronted with problems related to this issue, they feel hesitant to approach their parents and other adult members and they gather information through peers and the internet which often give them information that are not fully truthful. This leads to many youths believing in half truths about issues related to sex and hence, they become victims of sexual abuse and other sex related exploitations.

Due to the issues and problems caused by ignorance in sex related issues, research has been conducted on sex education in many parts of the world. This shows that extensive study of sex education is indispensable. The investigator has chosen parents of middle school students as they are the ones looking after students who are still very young and ignorant about sex and sex related issues.

The investigators have chosen the middle school among all other levels of education because middle school going period is a period of transition from childhood to adolescence. It is a period when students need to be given the right information about the environment around them so when they reach adolescence, they would be equipped with correct knowledge which will help them make correct decisions in life. It is with the hope that through this study, awareness will be given to parents of middle school students about sex education and its importance as a subject of study among their children that the present study has been chosen for extensive study.

Research Questions

1. What is the attitude towards sex education among parents of middle school students in Aizawl City?
2. What is the attitude towards sex education among parents of middle school students in Aizawl City with respect to gender?
3. Is there any difference in the attitude towards sex education among parents of middle school students in Aizawl City with respect to gender?
4. What is the attitude towards sex education among parents of middle school students in Aizawl City with respect to occupation?
5. Is there any difference in the attitude towards sex education among parents of middle school students in Aizawl City with respect to occupation?

Statement of the Problem

The problem of the present study is stated as “Attitude towards Sex Education: A Study among Parents of Middle School Students in Aizawl City”.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the attitude towards sex education among parents of middle school students in Aizawl City.
2. To find out the attitude towards sex education among parents of middle school students in Aizawl City with respect to gender.
3. To compare the attitude towards sex education among parents of middle school students in Aizawl City with respect to gender.
4. To find out the attitude towards sex education among parents of middle school students in Aizawl City with respect to occupation.
5. To compare the attitude towards sex education among parents of middle school students in Aizawl City with respect to occupation.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. There is no significant difference in the attitude towards sex education among parents of middle school students in Aizawl City with respect to gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the attitude towards sex education among parents of middle school students in Aizawl City with respect to occupation.

Methodology

Research Approach: The present study belongs to descriptive survey method.

Population and Sample: Since the present study is concerned with the study of the attitude of parents, the population of the present study comprises of all the parents of middle school students in Aizawl City. For the present study, the sample selected consisted of 200 parents: 100 female parents and 100 male parents of middle school students in Aizawl City. The sample was selected using Simple Random Sampling technique.

Tool Used: In the present study, the investigator employed “Attitude Scale towards Sex Education” developed by Dr. (Smt.) Usha Mishra. The scale consists of 32 items in which 16 items were positive and 16 items were negative.

Data Analysis: Data is collected and analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Appropriate statistical techniques like percentage, mean, standard deviations were

used for analysis of data. For comparison in terms of gender and occupation, t test was employed.

Analysis and Interpretations

1. Attitude towards Sex Education among Parents of Middle School Students in Aizawl City

Objective No. 1: *To find out the attitude towards sex education among parents of middle school students in Aizawl City.*

Table No. 1

Attitude towards Sex Education among Parents of Middle School Students in Aizawl City

Sl. No	Score Range	Stanine Grade	Interpretation	No. of Parents	%
1.	Above 129	9	Very High Attitude	80	40%
	120-129				
2.	110-129	8	High Attitude	84	42%
	100-109	7			
3.	90-99	6	Moderate Attitude	36	18%
	80-89	5			
4.	70-79	4	Low Attitude	Nil	Nil
	60-69	3			
5.	50-59	2	Very Low Attitude	Nil	Nil
	40-49	1			

As shown in Table no. 1, out of 200 parents in the sample, 40% of parents of middle school students have very high attitude towards sex education, 42% have high attitude towards sex education and the rest 18% have moderate attitude towards sex education. There are no parents who fall into the low and very low categories. The table shows that majority of the parents in the sample have high attitude towards sex education.

2. Attitude towards Sex Education among Parents of Middle School Students in Aizawl City with Respect to Gender

Objective No. 2: *To find out the attitude towards sex education among parents of middle school students in Aizawl City with respect to gender.*

Table No. 2

**Attitude towards Sex Education among Parents of Middle School Students in
Aizawl City with Respect to their Gender**

Sl. No	Score Range	Stanine Grade	Interpretation	No. of Male	No. of Female
1.	Above 129	9	Very High Attitude	13 (13)	67 (67)
	120-129				
2.	110-129	8	High Attitude	71 (71)	13 (13)
	100-109	7			
3.	90-99	6	Moderate Attitude	16 (61)	20 (20)
	80-89	5			
4.	70-79	4	Low Attitude	Nil	Nil
	60-69	3			
5.	50-59	2	Very Low Attitude	Nil	Nil
	40-49	1			

(Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage)

Table no. 2 reveals that 67% of female parents of middle school students have very high attitude while only 13% of male parents have very high attitude towards sex education. 13% of female parents fall in the category of high attitude towards sex education and on the other hand 71% of male parents fall in this category. 20% of female parents have moderate attitude towards sex education and also 16% of male parents have moderate attitude towards sex education. From the table above, it is shown that female and male parents do not have low and very low attitude towards sex education. Majority of female parents have very high attitude towards sex education and majority of the male parents have high attitude towards sex education.

3. Comparison of Attitude towards Sex Education among Parents of Middle School Students in Aizawl City with Respect to Gender

Objective No. 3: *To compare the attitude towards sex education among parents of middle school students in Aizawl City with respect to gender.*

Table No. 3**Comparison of Attitude towards Sex Education among Parents of Middle School Students in Aizawl City with Respect to Gender**

Groups	N	Mean	SD	SED	t value	Sig. Level
Male	100	108.09	9.84	1.84	0.32	NS
Female	100	108.68	9.32			

(NS – Not Significant)

Table no. 3 shows that the t value relating to the attitude towards sex education of parents of middle school students in Aizawl City with respect to their gender is not significant at both levels. Therefore, the hypothesis – “There is no significant difference in the attitude towards sex education of parents of middle school students in Aizawl City with respect to their gender” is accepted.

4. Attitude towards Sex Education among Parents of Middle School Students in Aizawl City with Respect to their Occupation

Objective No. 4: *To find out the attitude towards sex education among parents of middle school students in Aizawl City with respect to their occupation.*

Among the 200 parents in the sample, 56 are government employees and 154 are private employees.

Table No. 4**Attitude towards Sex Education among Parents of Middle School Students in Aizawl City with Respect to their Occupation**

Sl. No	Score Range	Stanine Grade	Interpretation	Govt.	Private
1.	Above 129	9	Very High Attitude	2 (4.35)	22 (14.29)
	120-129				
2.	110-129	8	High Attitude	36 (78.26)	103 (66.88)
	100-109	7			
3.	90-99	6	Moderate Attitude	8 (17.39)	29 (18.83)
	80-89	5			
	70-79	4			
4.	60-69	3	Low Attitude	Nil	Nil
	50-59	2			
5.	40-49	1	Very Low Attitude	Nil	Nil

(Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage)

Table no. 4 reveals that among parents of middle school students who are government employees, 4.35% parents have very high attitude and 78.26% have high attitude and the rest 17.39% have moderate attitude towards sex education. On the other hand, among parents of middle school students who are private employees, 14.29% have very high attitude towards sex education and 66.88% have high attitude and 18.83% have moderate attitude towards sex education. Here also, from the analysis of the data, it is seen that the parents of middle school students do not have low and very low attitude towards sex education with respect to their occupation. The majority of parents have favourable attitude towards sex education.

5. Comparison of Attitude towards Sex Education among Parents of Middle School Students in Aizawl City with Respect to their Occupation

Objective No. 5: *To compare the attitude towards sex education of parents of middle school students in Aizawl City with respect to occupation.*

Table No. 5

Comparison of Attitude towards Sex Education among Parents of Middle School Students in Aizawl City with Respect to their Occupation

Groups	N	Mean	SD	SED	t value	Sig. Level
Govt. Employee	56	106.70	7.91	1.61	1.21	NS
Private Employee	154	108.65	9.89			

(NS – Not Significant)

Table No. 5 shows that the t value relating to the attitude towards sex education among parents of middle school students in Aizawl City with respect to their occupation is not significant at both levels. Therefore, the hypothesis – “There is no significant difference in the attitude towards sex education of parents of middle school students in Aizawl City with respect to their occupation” is accepted. The parents of private employees have higher attitude towards sex education than the parents of government employees as the mean score of the parents of private employees of middle school students is higher than that of the parents of government employees.

Major Findings

1. Among the 200 parents in the sample, majority have favourable attitude towards sex education, i.e., 82% taking both categories of ‘very high’ and ‘high’ attitude towards sex education. There are no parents having negative attitude towards sex education.
2. Majority of female parents have ‘very high’ attitude towards sex education, i.e.,

67% of the total sample. Majority of male parents i.e., 71% have 'high' attitude towards sex education.

3. There is no significant difference in the attitude towards sex education of parents of middle school students in Aizawl City with respect to their gender
4. Majority of parents with respect to their occupation have favourable attitude towards sex education.
5. There is no significant difference in the attitude towards sex education of parents of middle school students in Aizawl City with respect to their occupation

Conclusion

This study is an attempt to find out parents' attitude towards sex education. The findings indicate that majority of parents in Aizawl city have positive attitude towards sex education. Current social problems relating to sex can be tackled if sex education is included in the school curriculum and the contents carefully selected by including only those that are appropriate according to students' age levels. Inculcating sex education in the young minds through formal education system can be beneficial in solving the many social problems and issues that are being faced today brought about by ignorance in sex and sex related issues. Parents' positive attitude towards sex education can play an important role in this regard.

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