

# Family life education in Schools: An investigation on Parents' attitude in Tamil Nadu

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**Abstract-** In this paper an attempt is made to assess parents' attitude towards offering of sexuality education at schools. The study was conducted during 2016 in five districts of Tamil Nadu. Totally 529 respondents were interviewed. A multistage sampling method was adopted to select the target population - ever married couples living with at least one child in the age group of 13-19 years. In the study area majority of the study population had the opinion to introduce the family life education to the students however the female respondents little more favour to introduce the sexuality education for students than the male respondents. It also noticed that among the religious groups, Muslims less favoured to teach sexuality education for students. Irrespective of the respondents' background condition majority of them were favoured to introduce family life education. Hence it is recommended that the teaching of sexuality education in schools should be made compulsory at national level. However it should be age appropriate and culturally sensitive keeping with the current SRHR needs of young people in India.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Adolescents are growing up in the world in which they experiment more, make choices and take risks and learn by their own experiences than by those of others. Many research studies have documented that generally adolescents lack of adequate knowledge on sexuality matters which results in early pregnancy, increased pre-marital sexual activity, increased risk of RTI/STIs including HIV/AIDS, maternal morbidity and mortality and unsafe abortions (Mahajan and Sharma, 2005). Many times, the adolescent receives incorrect information about sexuality and these myths and misconceptions are carried throughout their lifetime. Therefore, there is a need to provide Sexuality education which provides young people with the knowledge, skills and efficiency to make informed decisions about their sexuality and lifestyle (UNSEC, 2009) to adolescents so as to enable them to cope better with these changes. Under this backdrop this paper made an attempt to examine the parents' attitude towards offering of sexuality education at schools.

## II. METHODOLOGY

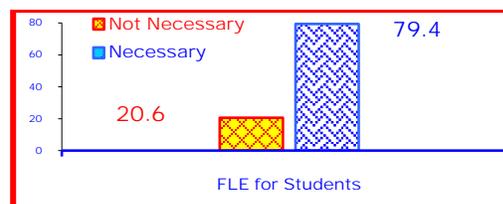
This study was conducted at Trichy, Kancheepuram, Thirunelveli, Cuddalore and Dharmapuri districts in Tamil Nadu during 2016 among 529 parents. The multi stage sampling technique was applied to select the sample districts, taluks, villages and the target population. As a first step in the selection of study population, house listing was conducted to identify the

ever married couples living with at least one child in the age group of 13-19 years. Totally 1960 households were indentified in 11 urban locations and it was decided to select one-fifth of the respondents from each of the urban locations. Total number of respondents who cooperate and completed the entire interview episode was 303 at the urban area. A similar method was applied to select the rural households. Totally 226 households' respondents were cooperate and completed the entire interview episode. Therefore the total sample size is 529.

## III. RESULTS

During the survey, the respondents were asked to state their opinion on 'Is it necessary to have sexuality education for students'. In the study locations, little less than eighty percent of the respondents had the opinion that the family life education or sexuality education is necessary to teach for the students. It is believed, generally, that people are not in-favour of sexuality education however in the study area majority of the study population had the opinion to introduce the family life education to the students. It indicates the hesitation against the sexuality education is decline in the society it may be due to the wake of new socio-economic progress.

**Association between background characteristics and the Respondents' Opinion on providing of Family Life Education for students:** An attempt is made to study the effect of background characteristics of the respondents on their opinion to launch family life education for students which may help to identify the differentials in their acceptance caused by socio-economic differentials.



**Percentage distribution of Respondents by their Opinion to introduce FLE**

**Table No. 1 Percentage distribution of Respondents by Opinion to introduce FLE for students with their Age and Sex**

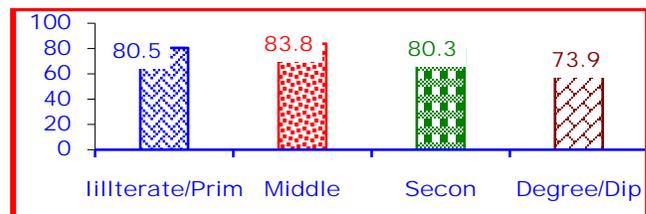
Respondents' Characteristics	Socio-Demographic	Opinion to offer FLE to students	Total
<b>Age<sup>NS</sup></b>			
Less than 35 years		77.7	121
36 – 40 Years		82.7	197
41– 447years		77.3	211
<b>Sex<sup>NS</sup></b>			
Male		78.3	212
Female		80.1	317
<b>Place of Residence<sup>NS</sup></b>			
Rural		82.7	226
Urban		76.9	303
<b>Family Type*3.450</b>			
Nuclear system		81.3	400
Joint system		73.6	129
<b>Religion * 7.019</b>			
Hindu		82.8	297
Muslim		70.9	110
Christian		78.7	122
<b>Caste* 9.832</b>			
SC		83.7	123
MBC		82.8	128
BC		72.9	218
FC		86.7	60

Chi-Square results: \* Sig. at 10% level; NS Not significant

Data shows that irrespective of age groups, a major proportion of respondents had the opinion that it is necessary to have sexuality education for students. However the proportion of persons who had accepted to launch the sexuality education for students was comparatively high in the 36-40 years age groups (82.7 percent) than the counterparts. It is quite contradictory to note that more or less equal proportion of the old age respondents (41-47 yrs) and young age respondents (> 35 yrs) in-favour of induction of family life education to the students which was less than the middle age population (36-40 yrs) in the study area.

An interesting observation is made with regard to the opinion to provide sexuality education in schools by sex of the respondents. In the study locations, female respondents little more favour to introduce the sexuality education for students (80.1 percent) than the male respondents (78.3 percent). As expected the respondents who live in the joint family system not much support to introduce the sexuality education for students. Data discloses that around 74 percent of the respondents who live in joint system had the opinion to launch the sexuality education and this proportion was further increased to 81.3 percent for the respondents living in nuclear family system. Data on religious analysis reveals that a considerable proportion of respondents in each of religious categories had favour opinion on introduction of family life education for students (Hindu 82.8 percent; Muslim 70.9 percent; and Christian 78.7 percent). Similarly majority of the respondents in each of the caste categories were favour of family life education at schools except BC category. The percentage of persons who had the favour opinion to offer the family life

education was comparatively high among FC (86.7 percent) and SC category (83.7 percent) than the counterparts.



**Percentage distribution of Respondents by their Opinion to introduce FLE by Educational Status**

The diagram did not show any major differences among the educational categories with respect to their opinion to offer FLE for students. It means, irrespective of their educational attainment, majority of them had the opinion that the students should receive the sexuality education. However, a quite contradictory observation also made that among the educational attainment categories, the degree/diploma holders reported lowest proportion (73.8 percent).

Data evident that majority of the respondents in each of the occupational categories reported that it necessary to have family life education for students. However, the proportion was ranged from 77.4 percent for 'not working' category to 84.8 percent for the 'wage laborer/former' category respondents.

**Table No. 2 Percentage distribution of Respondents by Opinion to offer FLE for students with their Occupation and Monthly Income**

Economic Status of Respondents	Opinion to introduce FLE	Total
<b>Occupation<sup>NS</sup></b>		
Not Working	77.4	199
Govt./ Private sector	78.1	178
Self employed	82.2	73
Wage labour / Former	84.8	79
<b>Monthly Income<sup>NS</sup></b>		
Up to 5000	81.1	111
5001 - 10000	78.2	156
10001 -20000	84.5	148
Above 20000	72.8	114

Table 2 shows the linkage between respondents' income level and their opinion to provide of sexuality education for students. Again it is proved that irrespective of their monthly income categories, most of the respondents had the positive attitude to provide sexuality education for the students. Generally mass media exposure will have an optimistic influence on the respondents' opinion. However, data on opinion towards launch of sexuality education for students shows pessimistic results - while the respondents' exposure on mass media increases their opinion towards introduce the sexuality education for student was decline. Out of 190 respondents who had less exposure to mass media, 83 percent of them favour to offer the sexuality education for the students whereas this proportion for the highly media exposed population was around 76 percent. Chi-square results clearly shows that the socio-economic demographic characteristics of the respondents not shown any strong influence on their opinion towards providing of family life education for students.

In this study an attempt also made to assess the effect of respondents' degree of religiosity on respondents' opinion towards to offer of family life education for students. The respondents' level of religious involvement increases their opinion to introduce family life education for the student was decreases. In the study area, more than eighty percent of the respondents who fall in the less religious involvement index had

the positive attitude towards to launch of sexuality education for the students (86.5 percent). This proportion was decline to 72 percent for the persons who had high level of religious involvement. It can be stated that the respondent's degree of religiosity have a negative impact on the respondent's attitude towards launch of sexuality education for students. More and more religious affinity or involvement may lead to have negative view of sexuality education. It is evident from the Chi-square analysis that a significant association is noticed between degree of religiosity and opinion to sexuality education for students ( $\chi^2=8.906$ , at 10%level). Similarly, majority of the respondents were in-favour of sexuality education for students, irrespective of their level of religious commitment. However while the respondents' level of religious commitment increases their opinion towards to offer sexuality education for the students was decline. This decline was from 85.7 percent to 73.0 percent to the respective index categories. It can be again proved that the respondent's degree of religiosity have an optimistic influence on opinion to offer sexuality education for students. It is evident from the Chi-square analysis that a significant association is noticed between the level of religious commitment and their opinion on sexuality education for students ( $\chi^2=12.171$ ,  $p=.000$ ).

**Table No.3 Percentage distribution of Respondents by Opinion to offer FLE for students with their Sexuality perception index**

Perception index on Sexuality	Opinion to introduce FLE	Total
<b>Sexuality Understanding<sup>NS</sup></b>		
Less understanding	75.3	97
Moderate	79.3	319
High	83.2	113
<b>Perception on Sexual relationship*** 11.631</b>		
Low perception	67.3	104
Moderate perception	81.9	287
High perception	83.3	138

Chi-Square results: \*\*\*Sig. at 1% level, NS Not significant

This table explains the influence of understanding of sexuality of the respondents on their opinion to offer sexuality education for the students. While the respondents' understanding on sexuality increases, their acceptance towards sexuality education for the students was increases. Data shows that about three-fourth of the respondents who fall in the less sexuality understanding index had the opinion to introduce sexuality education for the students. This proportion was increased to 79.3 percent among the moderate level and further increased to 83 percent for the persons who fall in the high level of understanding on sexuality. Similarly while the respondents' perception on sexuality relationship increases their approval of sexuality education for the students was also increases. About 67 percent of the respondents who fall in the low perception on

sexual relationship category agreed to launch the sexuality education for the students. This proportion was increased along with their level of perception on sexual relationship increases – 83.3 percent for the high level of perception category. Bivariate analysis shows a significant association between understanding of sexual relationship and their opinion on sexuality education for the students ( $\chi^2=11.631, p=.000$ ).

Table 4 presents the results of the logistic regression analysis which provide the independent effects of different background variables on the respondents' opinion on sexuality education for the students in the study area.

**Table No. 4 Results of logistic regression for determinants of acceptance of sexuality education among the study population**

SED Characteristics	B	S.E.	Sig.	Exp(B)	95.0% C.I.for EXP(B)	
					Lower	Upper
<b>Age<sup>NS</sup></b>						
> 35 years (R)			.245	1.000		
36 – 40 Years	.382	.317	.227	1.466	.788	2.727
41– 447years	-.047	.321	.882	0.954	.509	1.788
<b>Sex<sup>NS</sup></b>						
Male (R)				1.000		
Female	.194	.372	.601	1.215	.586	2.517
<b>Religion<sup>NS</sup></b>						
Hindu (R)			.755	1.000		
Muslim	-.246	.350	.482	0.782	.394	1.553
Christian	-.009	.310	.977	0.991	.540	1.819
<b>Caste*</b>						
SC (R)			.068	1.000		
MBC	-.030	.355	.932	0.970	.484	1.946
BC	-.335	.335	.318	0.715	.371	1.380
FC	.876	.497	.078	2.401	.907	6.360
<b>Place of residence<sup>NS</sup></b>						
Rural				1.000		
Urban	-.112	.259	.666	0.894	.538	1.485
<b>Family Type<sup>NS</sup></b>						
Nuclear (R)				1.000		
Joint	-.387	.259	.135	0.679	.409	1.128
<b>Educational<sup>NS</sup></b>						
Illiterates/Primary (R)			.315	1.000		
Middle	.332	.392	.397	1.394	.646	3.009
Secondary	.147	.414	.723	1.158	.515	2.605
Degree/Diploma	-.277	.441	.530	0.758	.320	1.798
<b>Occupation<sup>NS</sup></b>						
Not working (R)			.625	1.000		

Private/Public sector	.471	.409	.250	1.601	.718	3.568
Self employed	.500	.431	.246	1.649	.708	3.842
Wage/Formers	.166	.417	.690	1.181	.522	2.675
<b>Mass Media</b> <sup>NS</sup>						
Less exposure			.505	1.000		
Moderate	-.077	.317	.808	0.926	.498	1.722
High	-.367	.339	.279	0.693	.356	1.346
<b>Degree of religiosity**</b>						
Low degree			.013	1.000		
Moderate	-.369	.384	.336	0.691	.325	1.467
High	-1.002	.408	.014	0.367	.165	.816
<b>Sexuality Understanding</b> <sup>NS</sup>						
Less understanding			.341	1.000		
Moderate	.321	.301	.286	1.379	.764	2.487
High	.541	.373	.147	1.717	.826	3.568
Constant	1.551	.722	.032	4.716		
-2 Log likelihood 499.236						

\*\*\*Sig. at 1% level, \*\*Sig. at 5% level, \* Sig. at 10% level; NS Not significant; (R) Reference category

The results indicated that the odds ratio of opinion of respondents towards to offer sexuality education for the students compared to the reference category during the reference period, when the effects of other variables were controlled. The dependent variables were dichotomous in nature taking the value of one if it was reported that a person had optimistic view on sexuality education for students (yes=1; no=0). The explanatory variables included in this model were: age, sex, place of residence, religion, caste, education, occupation, monthly income, family types, media exposure, degree of religiosity and understanding of sexuality. The odds ratio shows 36-40 years age population were about 1.4 times more likely to have the optimistic view on sexuality education for the students than less than 35 years age population. The analysis confirmed the sex differences observed in the bivariate analysis with the lowest acceptance of sexuality education for students among male respondents and highest acceptance of sexuality education for students among female students. It is noticed from the odds ratio that Christians (OR= 0.991) and Muslims (OR=0.782) were less likely to favour of introducing sexuality education for students than the Hindus. Data shows that FC category persons were about 2.4 times more likely to accept the sexuality education for the students than the SC category population. And at the same time the odd ratio of BC (OR= 0.715) and MBC (OR=0.970) respondents were less likely to favour of introducing sexuality education for students than the SC population. As compared with nuclear family system, respondents living in the joint family system were about 67 percent less likely to favour of introducing sexuality education for students. Degree of religiosity had significant negative effect on acceptance of sexuality education for the students. The respondents who had high level of degree of religiosity were less likely to favour of introducing sexuality education for students (OR=0.367) than the reference category. It is inferred that the sexuality understanding index found to be an

important indicator and confirm positive association with acceptance of sexuality education for the students. The respondents who had high level of understanding on sexuality were about 1.7 times more likely to favour of introducing sexuality education for students than the reference category. Overall, Caste and Degree of religiosity of the respondents alone have shown any kind of statistical association with the dependent variable with the respective reference categories.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Over all, the research provides evidence that parents are having favorable attitude towards young people sexuality and sexuality education. The support of females towards offering of sexuality education at schools is higher than the males. It also noticed that among the religious groups, Muslims less favoured to teach sexuality education for students. The people those who had already better understanding about sexuality are more in-favour to introduce the sexuality education than those who had less understanding about sexuality. Hence it can be concluded that there is a strong unmet need for sexuality education and majority of the parents who participated in the research irrespective of their religious background and religiosity have favoured to introduce CSE. It is recommended that the teaching of sexuality education in schools should be made compulsory at national level. The curriculum should be with basic principles of equity, and sex positive and a gender sensitive approach. It should also be age appropriate and culturally sensitive keeping with the current SRHR e needs of young people in India.

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