



ANALYSIS OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT SEXUAL EDUCATION AMONG STUDENTS AT ENSINO BASICO CENTRAL 3º CICLO CRISTAL, BALIDE, DILI

Octaviano Mendonça, Fatima dos Santos, Casimiro Relvas Amaral, Sebastião Pereira
Instituto Superior Cristal, Dili Timor Leste

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to analyze students' levels of knowledge and awareness regarding sexual education at EBC 3º Ciclo Cristal Balide, Dili. A descriptive qualitative method was employed, with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data was analyzed using data collection, reduction, presentation, and conclusion techniques. The findings revealed that students understand the importance of sexual education and have basic knowledge about physical changes and personal hygiene. However, much of their information is obtained from unreliable sources, such as peers and the internet. Limited communication with teachers and family members due to embarrassment and fear remains a major challenge. In addition, students have insufficient understanding of sexual abuse and available support mechanisms. The study concludes that students' knowledge is still incomplete, highlighting the need to formally integrate sexual education into the school curriculum to provide exact, safe, and age-appropriate information.

INTRODUCTION

Sexual education is a topic that needs further revision and should be made compulsory for children to reduce or prevent sexual abuse, as shown by the increasing number of cases of sexual violence. Reports and studies show that sexual violence is a

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: octavianomendoca268@gmail.com (Octaviano Mendonça), fatihasantos95@gmail.com (Fatima dos Santos), casimiro78amaral@gmail.com (Casimiro Relvas Amaral), sebastiaoopereira@isc-tls.org (Sebastião Pereira)

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is a grave issue. Adolescence is a crucial period in human development marked by rapid physical, psychological, and social changes. Sabrina et al. (2025) to hormonal changes affecting reproductive and sexual development. (Fardiansyah et al. 2025).

According to (Fundasaun Azia Nian Teoria, n.d. 2022), a significant proportion of adults (90% of women and 80% of men aged 18 to 49) have experienced violence in childhood, including sexual violence. This highlights the scale of the problem over time. Cases and challenges are also reflected in news reports in 2025, which describe rescue operations of girls who were victims of sexual exploitation, indicating that the problem truly exists. Reports from 2023 also highlight gaps and the influence of patriarchy within the justice system, which affects how cases of sexual violence are handled, making it difficult for victims to obtain justice.

Based on information from reports by organizations such as JSMP, ALFeLa, Fundasaun Mahein, and the government, which published or covered issues in 2023—such as the influence of social norms and patriarchal culture, gaps and challenges in the formal justice system, impacts on victims and victim-oriented justice processes, and challenges related to digital crimes or online sexual violence it is clear that the problem lies not only in the law itself, but especially in its implementation and the influence of patriarchal systems that shape the justice system.

Looking at cases from various authors, most children are the primary targets of sexual violence because they are vulnerable, easily influenced through gifts or money, and easily subjected to coercion. This leaves students unprepared for the future when they become victims of sexual violence (Da Costa and Freitas 2025).

According to Tatolia Agencia Notisia de Timor-Leste (2022), Law No. 6/2023, dated March 1, concerning the protection of children and youth in danger, has been clarified. This law establishes crucial mechanisms to prevent violations and protect the rights of children and young people in dangerous situations. It defines the conditions and requirements for interventions by civil, administrative, and judicial entities, always based on the principles of minimum intervention, proportionality, and mandatory hearings, to strengthen a protection system that is centered on the victim (Alfaiz et al. 2024).

In addition to this fundamental law, (Democratic and Timor 2025) highlights that the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste emphasizes in Article 18 the

rights of children to special protection from the family, community, and the State, “particularly against all forms of abandonment, discrimination, violence, oppression, sexual abuse, and exploitation (Da Costa and Freitas 2025) . Thus, the author interprets Article 18 as placing the responsibility for protection on three structures: the family, the community, and the State.

This provides a basis to argue that sexual education must become an integrated program and cannot be left solely to schools or the State alone. The State has the obligation to develop a sexual education curriculum, train teachers, and ensure its proper implementation to fulfill its constitutional duty to provide protection. Meanwhile, families and communities need to provide education about children’s rights, including the right to receive information about their bodies and sexuality, so that they can become protective environments rather than places of abuse or discrimination.

Knowledge of sexual education is often considered sensitive and secret, or something that should not be openly discussed, both within the family and in schools, because sexuality is often regarded as taboo, vulgar, uncomfortable, and embarrassing. Parents’ fears also arise due to a lack of knowledge about sexual education (Hibban et al. 2024). However, early sexual education is not only about teaching intimate relationships, but also about educating students regarding their body parts and their functions. In this situation, teachers can take on the role of parents in providing sexual education knowledge to students, starting from an early age through adulthood (Vernanda et al., 2025)

Providing sexual education must be aligned with the stages of individual development. At each stage of development, students show different characteristics, including variations in the speed and consistency of their puberty changes, which lead to increasing curiosity about sexuality. According to Ningsi 2022), the main objective of early sexual education is not only to prevent the negative impacts of sexual characteristics, but also to develop positive attitudes and understanding of sexuality, along with a healthy and positive attitude toward personal sexuality. Therefore, early sexual education should be provided based on religious values.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach and is conducted at Ensino Basico Central. 30, Ciclo (EBC30 C) Cristal, Balide, Dili. The data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis follows (Haryono 2023), using qualitative analysis techniques consisting of four stages: (1) data collection, (2) data reduction, (3) data presentation, and (4) conclusion.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Result

This research was conducted at Cristal Private Senior High School. The population of this study is 200 grade 11 students of the Natural Science of Cristal Senior High School. Purposive sampling was utilized to determine the classroom. The class is composed of 22 students 12 females and 10 males.

The results obtained from the subjects or informants through interviews were six (6) student representatives, consisting of two (2) students from Grade 70, two (2) students from Grade 80, and two (2) students from Grade 90. The interviews were conducted directly with the subjects at the location.

Basic Knowledge of the Body and Physical Changes

Puberty is a developmental phase that involves not only physical changes, but also biological, cognitive, and social-emotional changes that prepare individuals for adulthood. Puberty usually occurs between the ages of 10 and 18 in females and 12 and 20 in males. In women, changes include breast development, the onset of menstruation, widening of the hips, hair growth in certain areas, increased height, skin changes, and the presence of vaginal fluid. Meanwhile, in men, changes include enlargement of the testicles and penis, changes in voice to become heavier, hair growth on the face and body, increased muscle mass, increased height, and the occurrence of ejaculation per

Each individual experiences puberty at a different time, typically around ages 8–13 in females and 9–14 in males. Therefore, it is important for adolescents to understand these changes and consult with parents or health professionals to obtain the correct

information. The results of the interviews show that students understand that puberty is a process of physical and psychological changes from childhood to adolescence, including menstruation in women, wet dreams in men, and changes in other bodily functions.

However, many students feel embarrassed and afraid when discussing body changes and sexual issues, so this topic is still considered sensitive. This shows that their knowledge of sexuality education is still limited and needs to be strengthened through the role of family and school. In addition, students revealed that at school, attention to education about the body and puberty changes is still not optimal, despite some advice or direction given. Therefore, more open, effective, and sustainable communication among students, teachers, and parents is needed so that students can better understand the changes in their physical and psychological well-being.

Knowledge of Reproductive Health and Personal Hygiene

The results of the interviews show that students have a basic understanding of reproductive health, though it remains limited. Students realize that the reproductive organs are a sensitive part of the body and function for reproduction, so they need a deeper understanding through sexual education.

To maintain the cleanliness of the reproductive organs, students understand that body hygiene is very important for health, especially after defecation and urination. However, their understanding of how to maintain the cleanliness of the reproductive organs still needs to be strengthened through clearer education. Among female students, some already know that menstruation is a natural process that occurs every month as part of the reproductive cycle. However, there is still a lack of information and communication, which leaves their understanding incomplete.

Male students have learned about wet dreams as a natural process during puberty that suggests that the reproductive organs are beginning to function, although further understanding is still needed. In general, students consider that sexual education on hygiene and reproductive health is important for preventing diseases, maintaining personal hygiene, and providing accurate information about body changes. This education is also considered important to increase students' awareness, responsibility, and ability to support their reproductive health (Costa et al. 2019).

Learning Places and Advice

The results of the interviews show that students obtain information about sexuality and relationships from a variety of sources, especially school, family, friends, and the internet. However, sex education in schools is still limited, so students often rely on informal sources that are not necessarily correct, thus risking getting incorrect or incomplete information.

Students argue that sex education in schools is essential to improve because it not only addresses sexual relationships, but also provides an understanding of the body, emotions, healthy relationships, and individual rights and responsibilities. This education is also important to prevent sexual violence, increase self-awareness, and help students make safe and responsible decisions.

Topics considered important to study further include the human body and puberty, reproductive organ function, menstruation and wet dreams, healthy relationships, sexual and reproductive rights, and prevention of sexual violence. Sexual education is also expected to be provided from an early age and continue until adolescence.

In addition, students do not feel entirely comfortable asking teachers directly about sex education. Therefore, more open learning methods, such as anonymous question boxes, are needed, along with a safe, non-judgmental school environment that encourages students to ask more questions.

As a suggestion, students want more effective sexual education with the use of interesting learning media such as pictures, human body props, and easy-to-understand methods. Sexual education also needs to be made more open, broad, and relevant to students' daily lives.

Additional Questions

The results of the interviews showed that most students said that they had no direct experience related to bullying or sexual harassment at school. However, there are some cases of mild bullying between friends, such as ridicule of certain physical conditions. This shows that there are still unpleasant behaviors in the school environment

that need the attention of teachers and the school.

Students understand that bullying and sexual harassment are different forms of violence. Bullying is an aggressive act that is done intentionally and repeatedly to hurt or intimidate others, while sexual harassment is unwanted sexual behavior.

In addition, students argue that sexual education is important in preventing various problems, such as early pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and sexual violence, as well as helping to improve adolescent understanding and awareness. Sexual education is also considered to be able to shape adolescents into more responsible, healthy, and able to face life's challenges well.

Discussions

Based on the analysis of the data above, the following results were obtained regarding students' level of sexual education knowledge at Ensino Básico 30 Ciclo Cristal Balide, Dili. The results of the study show that, in general, students have limited basic knowledge about sexual education, especially in aspects of the body and physical changes, reproductive health, and personal hygiene. The most dominant sources of information for students came from family (especially parents), books, peers, the internet, and social media. However, using these informal sources can lead some students to receive less accurate or incomplete information.

In addition, it was also found that there is still a lack of student understanding related to sexual education. This is because sexual topics are still considered taboo to talk about, both in the family and school environment. As a result, students also do not fully understand the concepts of personal hygiene, prevention of sexual violence, and how to ask for help when experiencing problems. In terms of beliefs and attitudes, students consider sex education to be an important thing in their lives. However, most students still feel embarrassed, scared, or uncomfortable talking about it with parents or teachers, even though they actually have a high level of curiosity.

Therefore, schools' role in providing formal, structured sexual education programs and integrating them into the school curriculum has become important. This aims to enable students to obtain correct and reliable information about sexual education. In line with that, according to Pereira et al. (2024), teachers believe that schools have a fundamental role in sexual education, but these responsibilities cannot be carried out

solely by schools, since the family also plays an important role in children's education.

On the other hand, there are several challenges in discussing sexual education, such as cultural factors and social norms that still consider this topic taboo, a lack of open communication, and limited teacher training in teaching the material (Sabrina et al. 2025). Thus, it can be concluded that students at Sekolah Ensino Básico 30 Ciclo Cristal Balide Dili have basic knowledge of sexual education, but this knowledge remains inadequate overall and is heavily influenced by unofficial or unverified sources.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that students are aware of the importance of sex education in their lives, but their knowledge is still incomplete and not entirely correct. Students still need more in-depth learning about diverse topics in sexuality education. Students are also expected to take responsibility and have the courage to understand and discuss matters related to the body and reproductive health appropriately. In addition, students need to improve their communication skills to convey the problems or questions they face. Therefore, it is necessary to continuously improve sexual education so that students can better understand themselves, address various internal issues, and acquire accurate, trustworthy knowledge in daily life.

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