

Parents Speak: Filipino fathers' and mothers' perspectives on sex education



Grace T. Cruz

Christian Joy P. Cruz

The University of the Philippines Population Institute

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State of sex education in the Philippines: policy environment

Republic Act No. 10354 – An Act providing for a national policy on responsible parenthood and reproductive health

Section 14. Age- and development-appropriate reproductive health education

Republic Act No. 9710 – An act providing for the magna carta of women

Section 17. Women's Right to Health

(4) Family and State collaboration in youth sexuality education and health services without prejudice to the primary right and duty of parents to educate their children



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State of sex education in the Philippines: programs

Department of Education

- Developed age-appropriate sex education modules in 2010 which were opposed by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP)
- Not implemented

University of San Carlos Office of Population Studies in partnership with the Philippine Center for Population and Development

- Developed Population and Development Education (POPDEVED) modules for Catholic schools
- Implemented in selected Catholic schools and public schools



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State of sex education in the Philippines: programs

Government programs to promote sex education

- Commission on Population/Department of Health
 - ✓ Adolescent Health and Youth Development Program
 - ✓ Sexually Healthy and Personally Effective Adolescent (SHAPE) training
- Department of Education
 - ✓ Population Education program
 - ✓ Revitalized Home Guidance Program
- Department of Social Welfare and Development
 - ✓ *Unlad Kabataan* Program



State of sex education in the Philippines: programs

Government programs to promote sex education

- Commission on Population
 - ✓ Parent Education Program on Adolescent Health and Development
- Department of Social Welfare and Development
 - ✓ Parent Effectiveness Services
 - ✓ Empowerment and Reaffirmation of Paternal Abilities



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State of sex education in the Philippines: programs

NGO programs to promote sex education

- Foundation for Adolescent Development
 - ✓ Manila Center for Young Adults
 - ✓ Teen Health Quarters
 - ✓ Dial-a-friend Program
 - ✓ Campus-based Program on Adolescent Reproductive Health and Sexuality
- The Philippine NGO Council on Population, Health & Welfare
 - ✓ Adolescent Reproductive Health Care Program
- Family Planning Organization of the Philippines
 - ✓ Development of Family Life Education for the Youth



State of sex education in the Philippines

Why the need for sex education in the country

- Increasing proportion of young people who engage in unsafe sex
- Increasing trend of early and unwanted pregnancy including teen pregnancy
- Sprouting cybersex businesses involving young people
- HIV cases is on the rise including young people



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Study Objectives

1. Assess the parents'
 - awareness of sex education
 - knowledge, attitude and preparedness to teach sex education to their adolescent children
 - openness to learn how to become more effective in teaching sex education to their adolescents.
2. Compare if there are differences in knowledge, attitude and ability to deliver sex education between fathers and mothers





DATA & METHODOLOGY





Study design

Study Respondents: Mothers and fathers with adolescent children ages 10-19 years old

Study Methodologies

- Focus Group Discussion (9 FGDs)
- Survey of a representative sample of Households, mothers, fathers in two areas in the Philippines (Metro Manila and Bohol)

Sample size: mothers – 808

fathers – 805



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FINDINGS



Profile of Respondents

There is a perceptible difference in the characteristics of fathers and mothers

- Most parents are formally married but a higher proportion of mothers are in a live-in arrangement or separated/divorce/widowed
- Mothers have higher education than fathers
- Majority have poor self-assessed SES with no significant difference between fathers and mothers
- Predominantly Roman Catholic but the mothers are more religious
- Parents are generally adept with information technology particularly among mothers than fathers



Awareness on Sex Education

Parents are generally aware of sex education
More among mothers compared to fathers

Awareness of Sex Education	Father	Mother	Both Parents
% who have heard of sex education***	79.8	87.0	83.4



Knowledge of sex education

Most parents particularly fathers associate sex education with FP

Knowledge of areas/topics included in sex education (%)	Father	Mother	Both Parents
Family Planning***	62.6	52.5	57.3
Pre-marital sex	22.7	19.3	21.0
Teenage pregnancy***	19.6	27.2	23.6
Not having sex/children at an early age***	9.8	16.6	13.4
Use of condoms	15.9	14.8	15.3
Boy/girl relationships**	11.7	16.4	14.1
Biological differences between males and females**	9.2	13.9	11.7



Sex Education in Schools

Generally, parents are clueless as to whether their children have sex education in school.

Greater awareness among mothers than fathers

Sex Education in Schools	Father	Mother	Both Parents
% who know if their adolescent children were taught sex education in school***	37.1	57.1	47.5



Sex Education in Schools

2 out of 3 parents agree that sex education should be taught in school.

Most parents prefer sex education to be introduced in high school or later.

Only a few would prefer to introduce sex education in elementary.

Sex Education in Schools	Father	Mother	Both parents
% who think sex education should be taught in school	66.3	68.4	67.3
Grade level when sex education should be taught in school***			
<i>Elementary</i>	11.1	17.0	14.1
<i>High School</i>	58.2	59.4	58.8
<i>College</i>	30.8	23.6	27.1



Why parents do not agree to Sex Education in School

Majority of the 33% who do not agree with sex education in schools think that it will unnecessarily make their children curious about sex

Reasons for those who think sex education should not be taught in school	Father	Mother	Both parents
Adolescents will learn what they should not learn	58.1	64.8	61.4
They will get curious about sex and apply it, bad effect	10.6	10.7	10.6
Not proper time, children are too young	10.9	11.1	11.0
Too vulgar " <i>malaswa</i> "	9.8	4.7	7.3



Reasons for not agreeing to Sex Education in School

“For me, it should not be the school [that should teach sex education] because the children do not know anything and they will learn... So, they can say, ‘oh, it is like this, maybe I should try it.’ The youth are like that [curious] now...” – Mother, Metro Manila



Sex Education at home

Only a fourth of parents had discussions on sex and related matters with their adolescents.

More discussion between moms and adolescents than dads and adolescents

Initiation on the discussion of sex at home	Father	Mother	Both parents
% who initiated discussion on sex and related topics with adolescent children***	20.1	31.2	25.7



Sex Education at home

Most discussions at home center on early sex

Topics discussed with adolescent children	Father	Mother	Both parents
Early sex	51.9	56.3	54.6
Physical differences between a boy & a girl	13.6	13.1	13.3
Bodily changes during adolescence**	11.7	20.2	16.9
Kissing	8.0	9.9	9.2



Sex Education at home

Majority of the parents who are not keen to initiate discussions on sex with their adolescent children said they feel that their children are too young for this kind of discussion, others feel it is vulgar.

Reasons	Father	Mother	Both parents
Children are too young for the topic**	60.9	53.7	57.6
Too vulgar	27.2	32.2	29.6
Embarrassed	19.7	23.1	21.3
Should be discussed in school**	6.9	10.2	8.4
Leave it to spouse***	4.6	1.5	3.1
Others (Not knowledgeable, children not asking about it, etc.)***	11.2	17.9	14.3



Why parents do not initiate any discussion on sex

“We are not comfortable discussing the topics on sex and sexuality with our children because it is lewd and vulgar for us and it is not our culture of sharing these topics to the members of the family. Topic on sexual intercourse should not be a subject for discussion.” - Father, FGD Bohol

“[I do not want to discuss it with my children] because they are girls... It is okay if it is a boy because you can easily talk to them, relate to them. If it is a girl, I get embarrassed to talk about these things.” – Father, FGD, Cagayan de Oro



Timing of Sex Education at home

Parents prefer to delay the initiation of sex discussion at home. Mothers are willing to initiate discussion on sex with adolescents earlier than fathers

Timing of sex education	Father	Mother	Both parents
Perceived mean right age of the children when their parents should start to discuss sex and related topics with them***	18.0	16.9	17.5



Sex Education at home

More fathers prefer to initiate discussion on sex with their adolescents when they are in their late teens to young adult

Perceived right age of the children when their parents should start to discuss sex and related topics with them***	Father	Mother	Both parents
No right age	10.8	10.6	10.7
6-12 (Pre teen)	6.5	9.6	8.1
13-15 (Early teen)	14.1	22.6	18.3
16-19 (Late teen)	34.6	37.0	35.8
20+ (Young adult)	34.1	20.2	27.1



Timing of sex education at home

“College is the best time that these issues [sex education] be discussed.” – Father, Metro Manila FGD

“Maybe with the right age...when they reach 18.” – Father, Metro Manila FGD.

“At early age [sex education should be introduced to the children]. Like what I have experienced...” – Mother, Cagayan FGD

“Maybe it should depend on the maturity level of the child. Some 11 years old are already mature; some are 14 years old but are not yet matured.” – Mothers, Metro Manila FGD



Sex Education at home

Parents feel that their adolescents are equally reluctant to initiate discussion on sex and related matters with their parents. Fathers feel greater reluctance among their adolescents to discuss with them on matters relating to sex compared to mothers.

Sex education at home	Father	Mother	Both parents
% whose adolescent children ask R about sex and related topics***	8.2	17.5	12.9



Sex Education at home

Adolescents start to ask their parents question on sex sooner than parents feel it is appropriate for them to discuss sex matters

Mean age when adolescent children first asked about sex and related issues	Father	Mother	Both parents
Son/s	13.2	12.4	12.7
Daughter/s	13.7	12.6	12.9



Sex Education at home

More mothers say that their adolescent son/s start asking them questions on sex during their pre-teens

Age when son/s first asked about sex and related issues**	Father	Mother	Both parents
6-12 (Pre teen)	39.6	61.8	53.2
13-15 (Early teen)	37.5	21.1	27.4
16-19 (Late teen)	22.9	17.1	19.4



Sex Education at home

More mothers say their adolescent daughter/s start to ask them questions on sex during their pre-teen years

Age when daughter/s first asked about sex and related issues**	Father	Mother	Both parents
6-12 (Pre teen)	32.4	53.4	47.9
13-15 (Early teen)	35.1	32.0	32.9
16-19 (Late teen)	32.4	14.6	19.3



Who should teach Sex Education to adolescents?

Most parents think parents should teach sex education to their children.

Perception on parents' role in teaching sex education	Father	Mother	Both parents
% who think that parents should be the one to teach their children sex and related topics	58.3	62.1	60.2



Parents' capacity to teach sex education

A great majority of the parents think they are able to handle their adolescent's questions on sex and related topics...

Getting equipped for sex education at home	Father	Mother	Both parents
% who were able to answer all of their adolescent children's question on sex and related topics	89.4	87.2	87.9



Parents' capacity to teach sex education

...BUT at the same time admit they are not fully equipped to do so.

Knowledge on sexuality	Father	Mother	Both parents
% who think they have enough knowledge on sexuality to teach their adolescent children	66.3	69.7	68.1



Willingness to learn how to teach Sex Education

Most parents, particularly mothers are willing to learn more on how to teach sex education to their adolescent children.

Willingness to learn	Father	Mother	Both parents
% who are willing to learn more on how to teach sexuality to their adolescent children***	44.9	55.1	50.2



Training needs of parents on Sex Education

Areas of sexuality where parents think they need further knowledge on	Father	Mother	Both parents
Family planning, contraceptives, birth control	34.8	38.0	36.6
Safe sex, pre-marital sex, other related topics	28.9	25.2	26.8
Pregnancy-related topics	11.3	9.8	10.4
Boy/girl relationships, courtship***	17.2	7.9	11.9
Marriage-related topics	6.9	9.0	8.1
Anything that is good for the adolescents	9.3	5.6	7.2





CONCLUSION



Conclusion

- Majority of Filipino parents in the two study areas have heard of sex education but there is still a considerable proportion (particularly fathers) who have not yet heard about it.
- Generally parents recognize the wide range of issues that are covered under sex education but most of them particularly fathers associate sex education with FP.



Conclusion

- There is very little discussion of sex and related issues at home.
- Parents feel that like them their adolescents are likewise reluctant to initiate discussions relating to sex at home.
- Fathers are more comfortable to discuss sex and related matters with their sons than their daughters.



Conclusion

- There is a significant gap in the perceived timing of sex education initiation
- Generally, parents want to delay until their children are in their later teens or early adult stage or long after they say their children start to be curious about sex.

Parents report that their children start to become curious about sex before they turn 13





Conclusion

Parents find it difficult to discuss matters relating to sex with their children because they think...

- Their children are too young (age inappropriate)
- It is too vulgar
- It is embarrassing
- It is better discussed in school or with spouse (according to fathers)



Conclusion

- Significant proportion of parents think that sex education should be taught in school
- At the same time, majority of the parents think they should be the one to handle their sex education
 - 65% of the respondents said it should be taught in school



Conclusion

- While parents feel it they should be their children's sex education teachers, many feel they are not quipped to do so.
- Not all of those who report that their children asked them about sex were able to answer all their children's questions because of their lack of knowledge.



Conclusion

- But the majority, particularly of mothers are willing to learn more on how to better handle their children's sex education.
- Parents particularly desire to get more understanding on the following areas:
 - Family planning, contraceptives, birth control
 - Safe sex, pre-marital sex, other related topics
 - Boy/girl relationships, courtship
 - Pregnancy-related topics



Recommendations:

- Need to address the following through more intensified information dissemination and capacity building.:
 - Remaining gap in parent awareness of sex education
 - The mistaken notion that sex education = FP
 - Ambivalence and reluctance among parents to teach sex education to their children
 - Greater reluctance and lesser knowledge among fathers on sex education.





Recommendations:

- Government should tap on the receptiveness of parents, to learn more on how to better deal with adolescent sex and development issues.
- Mother's interest should be sustained.
- Intervention programs should be conceptualized to
 - Encourage greater interest among fathers
 - Help fathers provide the sex education for both their sons and daughters.



Recommendations:

- Training programs should emphasize responsible parenting and positive role modeling
 - parents should be good role models to their adolescents in promoting healthy lifestyle and overall well-being
- Relabeling the program
 - Many parents are wary when they hear the word ‘sex’ in the program for their children. Contextualizing this in a broader context such as adolescent health and development and values education may help promote greater appreciation among parents.





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THANK YOU!

Grace T. Cruz
gracetcruz@yahoo.com

Christian Joy P. Cruz
cjoypcruz@gmail.com

