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IMPLEMENTATION OF SEXUALITY EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS (LEARNING DISABILITIES)

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Abstract: *This study aimed to identify the level of implementation of sexuality education for students with special needs (learning disabilities) among secondary school special education teachers using questionnaires. A total of 106 special education teachers from 28 secondary schools in Hulu Langat Selangor District and Baling Sik Kedah District in Malaysia were involved in this cross-sectional study. Data from questionnaires and surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics. A frequency distribution with mean score and percentage were used. The analysis results showed that the implementation of sexuality education in terms of practice and support is relatively high. In contrast, the sexuality education level for the planning and outcome aspects is high. One of the main objectives of special education in this country is to provide quality services to students with special needs towards excellence in life that align with the national education philosophy's aspirations. This study offers a new contribution to special education teachers in Malaysia to effectively implement sexuality education through training, exposure, guidance, and ongoing involvement from the Ministry of Education and Parents.*

Keywords: Sexuality Education, Implementation, Practices, Support, Planning, Outcomes, Teachers, Special Education, Special Needs Students, Learning Disabilities.

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1. Introduction

A report released by the Department of Social Welfare (JKM) stated that sexuality issues were recorded at the highest rate over five years compared to other school students' issues (Norsaleha et al., 2018). The shortcomings in the Implementation of Sexuality Education showed teachers' low level of knowledge on the content itself (Adibah Hanim & Mohd Hanafi, 2018; Shariza Said et al.,2014), which in turn leads to problems to teachers' awareness and readiness in implementing sexuality education to special needs students. According to Shariza Said (2017), teachers' knowledge is essential in implementing sexual education. Ang & Lee (2013) also argued that the lack of knowledge has caused the teachers to become ignorant about sexuality education. When these two factors were combined, a gap was identified where teachers think that special needs students have learned what they need to know in primary school. Due to that factor, teachers do not feel the obligation and demand for teaching sexuality education in secondary school (Ketting et al.,2016).

Sexuality education has been implemented in the national curriculum since 1989 (Azizah et al., 2012). The implementation of sexuality education is given a limited amount of time, which is twice a week. According to Shariza Said (2017), this effort is less effective. The problem of misconduct among special needs students related to sexuality education is still frequent as reported by Utusan Online (2016), Astro Awani (2018) and Berita Harian [7-10) as well as previous researchers (Haja Mydin et al., 2016; Ruayah, 2017; Siti Suhaila et al., 2017). The aim of sexuality education has been taught at school purposely as an early exposure on knowledge, skills, and attitudes to the students, be it as a precaution or as guidance (Brown et al.,2020). It is supposedly becoming a shield and a measure as students could prepare themselves approaching puberty rather than considered ‘taboo’; hence the lesson was far from encouraging sexuality behaviors (Nik Daliana, 2018; European Expert Group on Sexuality Education 2016). According to Ünlüer (2018), misconception rooting believes that sexuality education contains explicit sexual content as the main subjects.

The support sources from the Ministry of Education (MOE) include teaching materials, supporting tools and appropriate training are essential components in sexuality education as reported in (Schaafsma et al., 2017). The parents of special needs students negatively thought about how sexuality education will be implemented in their children. This is due to the concern that their children will be prone to sexual misconduct. Meanwhile, according to (Chai Tin Ang & Lee Lay Wah, 2017), without prior knowledge about sexuality, the special needs students will easily be caught too. Thus, teachers have problems teaching in terms of doubting their teaching techniques, lacking confidence, having minimal exposure, and not getting enough training. What teachers need is their adaptation skills towards knowledge, training, and skills to teach (Mkumbo, 2012).

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Different researchers have conducted several studies concerning sexuality education. Ang Chai Tin (2014) focuses on module development without evaluating sexuality education implementation from the four constructs mentioned, namely teachers' knowledge, resources, training, and pedagogy. However, the module is not usable. The study conducted by Siti Khadijah and Mohd Hanafi (2019) on sexuality education teaching practice also does not investigate the relationship between aspects of teachers' practice and sexuality education teaching outcomes. This is because other factors hinder teachers from implementing sexuality education at the school level. One of the factors that make sexuality education not implemented by teachers based on the study is parental cooperation, and the study only uses the parent population.

According to Siti Suhaila et al. (2017; 2018), the pause of puberty in adolescents is in middle school. Khalaf et al. (2014) also use qualitative research methods to study in more detail professionals such as doctors and therapists compared to this study, which only involves respondents from the group of teachers and the appropriate number of respondents to represent the population. Meanwhile, Makol-abdul et al. (2009) investigated the effectiveness of sexuality education was only aimed at parents and conducted in one location only. Thus, this study aimed to examine the level of implementation of sexuality education to address teachers' problems with students with disability (SWD) based on the existing education system's performance.

2. Literature Review

The definition of sexuality education (SE) generally means studying male and female gender characteristics and information. Both genders have their features of sexuality, which is an essential aspect of life aimed at providing knowledge related to the function, structure, and anatomical characteristics of human reproduction (European Expert Group on Sexuality Education, 2016). The study of Jaafar et al. (2012) stated that sexuality education is the knowledge of sex education encompassing all teaching measures and protection, prevention, presentation, and family development. Furthermore, Bruess and Greenberg (2004) argued that sexuality education is not just a narrow scope because it also covers lifelong learning aspects to obtain information that forms attitudes, values and identity, beliefs, and relationships and social. In implementing sexuality education, there are several aspects involved, namely, elements of practice, support, planning, and results. These four aspects have been studied by previous researchers abroad and domestic contexts.

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To improve the level of implementation of sexuality education, previous studies have examined the aspects involved in the practice of sexuality education. SE practices for aspects of teacher knowledge have been discussed by Maia and Vilaça (2020) in Brazil, who found that knowledgeable teachers in SE can improve the quality of SE teaching. Brown et al. (2020) discusses SE practices for planning aspects and found that parents need to be involved in discussions with teachers in addition to teachers. According to Chai Tin and Lay Wah (2019), this situation is different in Malaysia because teachers follow the ministry of education's instructions based on the existing curriculum without involving parents in their planning. SE practices for the aspect of direction have been studied by Nelson et al. (2019) in Sweeden, who found that teachers master the appropriate SE direction according to the needs of dynamic SWD. Simultaneously, the practice of SE for attitude has been studied in Turkey by Unluer (2018), who found that teachers show an attitude of avoiding giving lessons related to SE. Heslop et al. (2019), on the other hand, reviewed the practice of SE for the aspect of commitment and suggested continuity between the authorities issuing instructions and teachers so that these two parties can benefit in the implementation of SE.

The implementation of SE in schools requires the support of parties directly or indirectly involved. Local and foreign researchers have discussed studies related to support in the implementation of SE. The survey of Heslop et al. (2019) and Chai Tin and Lay Wah (2019) found that financial resources contribute to the success of SE. In comparison, the study in China by Ziyin Xiong (2019) aims to assess the ability of teachers in carrying out SE from three aspects, namely: (i) ability to implement SE; (ii) the ability to deliver SE; and (iii) ability in using SE implementation support resources. Keogh (2020) has conducted a study on SE support for infrastructure resources, which found that when these resources are insufficient, teachers will face a significant challenge in implementing SE. Besides, continuous training is also a crucial aspect that supports teachers in improving their quality in implementing SE (King, 2017; Nelson et al., 2019). Support for the implementation of SE for aspects of parental cooperation has been studied by several researchers (King, 2017; Brown et al., 2020; Marshall et al., 2020) and found that the implementation of SE to SWD is challenging to succeed if there is no direct parental involvement or indirect.

In reviewing the implementation of SE for planning aspects, Nelson et al. (2019) have conducted a study on teacher preparation in implementing SE. He also suggested the need for specific modules to convey SE to SWD so that it is easy to understand according to their respective disabilities (Aderemi, 2013). In contrast, Heslop et al. (2019) and Marshall et al. (2020) examined the implementation of SE from the stakeholder perspective and proposed systematic planning as a guide for teachers so that SE can run smoothly. SE planning for pedagogical aspects has been studied by Unluer (2018) and found that teachers who teach SE need to make judgments and refrain strictly and refer to superiors when faced with student sexual behavior situations. This is in response to the ability of teachers to master pedagogy effectively. At the same time, SE planning for the guidance aspect has been carried out by several researchers (Eisenberg et al., 2013; Aderemi 2013; Nelson et al., 2019; Maia & Vilaça, 2020; Miedema et al., 2020; Carl et al., 2019) and agreed that this aspect is fundamental in SE and should be in line with the needs of SWD.

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Local and foreign researchers have extensively studied the results of the implementation of SE. Chirawu et al. (2014) have found that self-confidence helps teachers deliver compelling, sensitive SE topics. Next, in terms of reproductive skills and social skills, two previous researchers, namely Eisenberg et al. (2013) and Burns and Hendriks (2018), have suggested that SE teaching should contain the following topics (a) Skills in recognizing and understanding sexual orientation (b) teaching about prevention and reproductive system (c) self-control and social skills (d) skills for maintaining personal, physical and mental safety. Meanwhile, a local study by Razali et al. (2017), who analyzed seventy-nine articles from various sources, found that SE has started over decades and the findings show that during this period, the focus of SE in Malaysia is to: (a) provide SE and reproductive (b) issues arising from the content and curriculum (c) choose what is the best approach for SE either in 'abstinence' or the context of morality and consequences.

In the context of local studies, Johan and Mohd Yassin (2019) have studied 86 special education teachers and found the relationship between knowledge and SE practice among SWD teachers. The study also found that the issues discussed were SE misunderstandings, objections to SE content, lack of cooperation between family and parents, lack of training for teachers, and lack of collaboration from various experts to reach a consensus. While the study abroad by Castillo (2019) has found the relationship of teachers' perceptions with the Comprehensive Sexuality Education approach, various authorities and stakeholders should play their respective roles to improve the quality of SE. In conclusion, in the study that has been carried out, teachers' meaning is a determining factor in the success of SE towards students. Still, parents' support and cooperation and the ministry of education and outsiders also play an essential role.

3. Research Methodology

This is a quantitative study using the survey method. The research instrument is a questionnaire that has been adapted from several previous studies and divided into several parts, namely: Part I – Demographics (6 Items) and Part II Practice (22 items), Support (23 items), Planning (18 items) and Outcome (11 items). The study participants were a total of 106 special education teachers from 28 secondary schools from Hulu Langat District of Selangor and Baling Sik District of Kedah in Malaysia. The data collected was then analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis involving mean and standard deviation, and the mean interpretation score was indicated as follows

Table 1: Interpretation of Mean Score

Scale Range	Interpretation
1.01 1.01– 2.00	Low
2.01 – 3.00	Moderately Low
3.01 – 4.00	Moderately High
4.01 – 5.00	High

Source : Nunally (1978)

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4. Findings

Table 2: Practices for the Implementation of Sexuality Education

No	Aspect	Mean	S.D	Interpretation
1	Knowledge	3.33	0.81	Moderately High
2	Planning	3.26	0.73	Moderately High
3	Direction	3.33	0.84	Moderately High
4	Attitude	3.48	0.82	Moderately High
5	Commitment	3.22	0.80	Moderately High
	Overall Mean	3.32	0.69	Moderately High

Based on the table above, the level of the implementation of sexuality education based on practice aspects is a moderately high level with a mean value of 3.32 and a standard deviation of 0.69. The aspect that has the highest mean is the attitude aspect, with a mean value of 3.48 and a standard deviation of 0.82. While the aspect that has the lowest mean is the commitment aspect with a mean value of 3.22 and a standard deviation of 0.80.

This shows that the implementation of sexuality education among special needs students has reached a relatively satisfactory level. Siti Khadijah et al. (2019) also found similar results in their study. However, according to Abd. Rahim (2010), one of the issues that affect the implementation of sexuality education in schools in Malaysia is teachers' credibility. This issue is further explained in this study, where the findings showed that although teachers' knowledge is at a relatively satisfactory level, their commitment to implementing sexuality education is still unsatisfactory. Risa Maulana dan Rojai (2013) also agree that experience is one aspect that can influence the implementation of the educational curriculum in schools. Ety Nur Inah (2015) also added that extensive knowledge among teachers could improve content delivery to achieve learning goals. However, special education teachers in this study did not have a high commitment to implementing sexuality education. This is due to the lack of a clear guideline for teachers on delivering such information (Ang & Lee, 2013).

Table 3: Supports for the Implementation of Sexuality Education

No	**Aspect**	**Mean**	**S.D**	**Interpretation**
1	Financial Resources	3.10	0.87	Moderately High
2	Insfrastructure	4.10	0.79	High
3	Teachers' Resources	3.54	0.86	Moderately High
4	Parents' Cooperation	4.14	0.70	High
	Overall Mean	**3.72**	**0.59**	**Moderately High**

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Table 3 shows the level of the implementation of sexuality education based on support aspects is moderately high, with a mean value of 3.72 and a standard deviation of 0.59. The highest mean is parents' cooperation, with a mean value of 4.14 and a standard deviation of 0.70. While the aspect of financial resources has the lowest mean value of 3.10 and a standard deviation of 0.87.

The aspects studied in this study are also essential in enhancing sexuality education (2017) dan Makol Abdul (2009). This study's findings prove that parents have begun to be involved in the implementation of sexuality education. This is contrary to the results of previous studies conducted by Salmi Razali et al. (2017), which found that parents are not exposed to sexuality education, making them unable to educate their children well. Besides, the school has also provided adequate infrastructure to ensure that sexuality education can run well. However, teachers agree that there are still challenges and obstacles in implementing SE due to the financial aspects and the lack of trained teachers. The findings of this study are in line with the task of Salmi Razali. et al. (2017) stated that this is one of the challenges that are often faced by teachers who are involved in the implementation of SE in Malaysia. Siti Khadijah and Hanafi (2019) and Dapudong (2014) also added that the parties involved need to prepare a structured individual plan and appropriate classroom adaptation based on efficient financial implications to smoothly teach sexuality education.

Table 4: Planning of Sexuality Implementation

No	Aspect	Mean	S.D	Interpretation
1	Readiness	3.82	0.65	Moderately High
2	Plan	4.13	0.69	High
3	Pedagogy	4.12	0.63	High
4	Guidance	4.29	0.34	High
	Overall Mean	**4.09**	**0.48**	

Based on the table above, the level of the implementation of sexuality education based on planning aspects is at a high level with a mean value of 4.09 and a standard deviation of 0.48. The guidance aspect has the highest mean value of 4.29 and a standard deviation of 0.34. While the financial resources aspect has the lowest mean value of 3.84 and a standard deviation of 0.65.

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In the planning aspect, the study found that special education teachers are ready and confident. This is probably due to the efforts to spread sexuality education, which has successfully opened various parties' eyes. There are differences in the previous study, which found that teachers' poor planning affected the implementation of sexuality education (Ang Chai Ting, 2013; Adibah.et,al., 2 01 , Shariza et al., 2017). However, the findings of this study showed otherwise. Overall, teachers showed improvement in planning and pedagogy,e in line with some previous studies. Irina and Elena (2016), Khadijah and Hanafi (2018), Ang and Lee (2014) collectively agreed that special education teachers would have readiness upon receiving adequate guidance. This includes systematic, continuous, and planned training process that enhances teachers' self-worth (Mohd Azhar et al., 2004).

Table 5 : Sexuality Education Outcome

No	Aspect	Mean	S.D	Interpretation
1	Efficacy	3.98	0.60	Moderately High
2	Reproductive Skill	4.08	0.58	High
3	Social Skill	4.23	0.66	High
	Overall Mean	**4.10**	**0.56**	

The table above shows the level of the implementation of sexuality is at a high level with a mean value of 4.10 and a standard deviation of 0.56. The aspect that has the highest mean is the aspect of social skills, with a mean value of 4.23 and a standard deviation of 0.66. Simultaneously, the efficacy aspect has the lowest mean with a mean value of 3.98 and a standard deviation of 0.60.

Although the overall findings were at a high level, this study found that the efficacy results were at a moderate level. In this study, efficacy is shown as one of the teacher's weaknesses in the implementation of sexuality education compared to teaching reproductive skills and social skills. Based on this aspect, Fazli Khalaf et al. (2014) stated that many teachers are not persevered and have low efficacy. Therefore, when teachers feel less confident and feel challenging to pronounce specific terms in sexuality education, its targets and goals are difficult to achieve (Ang dan Lee, 2016). However, most importantly, teachers have mastered the crucial aspects of social and reproductive skills in sexuality education. Besides, Adibah Hanim Ab. Latif. et al. (2018) also stressed the importance of special education teachers having a high mastery level. Similar findings have also been stated in several other studies (Ang Chai Tin, 2014; Shariza Said et al., 2014; Ruayah Doren, 2017), which showed that special education teachers' mastery and confidence in the content of teaching sexuality education become a benchmark towards the success of the implementation.

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5. Conclusions

This study aims to evaluate the level of implementation of sexuality education to address teachers' problems with special needs students (SWD) based on the implementation of the existing education system. This study's findings indicated that the parties involved in the implementation of sexuality education have an unsatisfactory understanding. This has a negative impact on teachers in playing their role as educators (Khalaf et al., 2014). One of the parties directly involved in sexuality education is parents (Ang & Lee 2013; Mutalip & Mohamed, 2012). To implement sexuality education on special needs students with learning problems, parents' role is vital because it impacts the effectiveness of the curriculum used by teachers (Pute Rahimah & Makol-Abdul et al., 2009).

Thus, teachers' competencies need to be improved to achieve the objectives targeted at special needs students. Therefore, it can be concluded that the level of implementation of this sexuality education for the aspects of practice and support is at a moderate level that requires further action by various parties. Among the efforts that can be done is to provide training, exposure, guidance, and involvement by the ministry and parents to special education teachers. Researchers also suggest that future studies should be done in-depth qualitatively through interview methods. Besides, a module that can be applied as a guide in the implementation of sexuality education should be developed to facilitate teachers who play a direct role in this programme.

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