



**Experiences and Perceptions  
of Mid-adolescents, Parents  
and Teachers on  
Comprehensive Sexuality  
Education: A Multiple  
Country-based Qualitative  
Research Study in  
Bangladesh, Jordan, Burundi**

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## Executive Summary

The purpose of the study was to explore the experiences, perceptions and knowledge accessibility of mid adolescents aged between 14 to 17, parents and teachers regarding school-based comprehensive sexuality education and disseminate the data through policy brief with the infographic data for further advocacy to ensure sexuality education as universal access mechanism and a better understanding of sexuality education by November 2021.

There is no doubt that young people represent the most important group in the future of this country, especially since twenty one percent of Jordanian population of 11 million people falls in the age group between 15 and 24 years, and the possibility of this large group of young people becoming healthy and productive individuals in the world. community: Depends on the volume of investments made by the government and civil society in social, economic, and political programs that meet their needs. In the conservative societies like Jordanian where, discussing sex-related issues openly is unacceptable, and in some families, a taboo youth are more likely to experience difficulties in obtaining specific and timely SRH services and education due to sociocultural taboos in several societies worldwide. Schools can reach large numbers of children and young people from diverse backgrounds via trained adult professionals. The demand for sexuality education comes from learners themselves and they want to be active participants in the learning process. The formal curriculum is a long-term and sustainable way of imparting information about sexual and reproductive health and the best environment to challenge the root causes of gender inequality and gender-based violence in society. Data was collected through face-to-face individual interviews, which last between 30-40 minutes from 5 couples (parents), 10 teachers and 17 mid adolescents. The participants were recruited from Amman the capital of Jordan and one city at the north of Jordan (Jerash). Guidelines were prepared to share with interviewees. The study concluded that all stakeholder's emphasis the important for sexual education for the youth but discussing sex-related issues openly is unacceptable, and in some families, a taboo, youth are more likely to experience difficulties in obtaining specific and timely SRH services and education.

## Introduction

The purpose of this policy brief is to inform on the results of a study that was conducted in Jordan to explore the experiences, perceptions and knowledge accessibility of mid adolescents aged between 14 to 17, parents and teachers aged between 28 to 52 regarding school-based comprehensive sexuality education to ensure sexuality education as universal access mechanism and a better understanding of sexuality education.

There is no doubt that young people represent the most important group in the future of this country, especially since twenty one percent of Jordanian population of 11 million people falls in the age group between 15 and 24<sup>1</sup> years, and the possibility of this large group of young people becoming healthy and productive individuals in the world. Community depends on the volume of investments made by the government and civil society in social, economic, and political programs that meet their needs. In the conservative societies like Jordanian where, discussing sex-related issues openly is unacceptable, and in some families, a taboo<sup>2</sup>, youth are more likely to experience difficulties in obtaining specific and timely SRH services and education due to sociocultural taboos in several societies worldwide<sup>3</sup>.

The availability of appropriate information and services in the field of sexual and reproductive health is a necessary matter, as many young people remain in education for longer periods. Sexuality education delivered within a safe learning environment and alongside access to youth-friendly health services has a positive and lifelong effect on the health and wellbeing of children and young people<sup>4</sup>. It is important to stress that children and young people need both informal and formal sexuality education. The two should not be opposed; they complement one another. “School settings provide an important opportunity to reach large numbers of children and young people with sexuality education before they become sexually active, as well as offering an appropriate structure.

Schools can reach large numbers of children and young people from diverse backgrounds via trained adult professionals. The demand for sexuality education comes from learners themselves and they want to be active participants in the learning process. Schools are effective structures for the teaching and learning of tomorrow’s citizens. The school curriculum is designed to address the educational and social-emotional needs of children and young people in an age-appropriate manner. The formal curriculum is a long-term and sustainable way of imparting information about sexual and reproductive health and the best environment to challenge the root causes of gender inequality and gender-based violence in society.

The Higher Population Council (HPC) in Jordan has given special attention to youth-friendly reproductive health services. In 2017, the Higher Population Council prepared youth friendly

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<sup>1</sup> The Department of Statistics, Jordan in Figures 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Shdayfat NM, Green G. Reflections on sex research among young Bedouin in Jordan: risks and limitations. *Culture, health & sexuality* 2012; **14**(1).

<sup>3</sup> BZgA, UNFPA, WHO Regional Office for Europe. 2015a. Policy Brief No. 1. Sexuality Education: What Is it? Cologne, BZgA

<sup>4</sup> BZgA, UNFPA, WHO Regional Office for Europe. 2015a. Policy Brief No. 1. Sexuality Education: What Is it? Cologne, BZgA

reproductive health services policy brief<sup>5</sup>. The analysis of the situation of the provision of reproductive health services for youth in Jordan revealed that young people face many challenges in obtaining reproductive and sexual health services. Furthermore, interviews with some health service providers showed that current services are not based on national standards, there is a lack of youth-specific services such as consultations, counselling and guidance, and a lack of a designated place for the provision of service.

Also, UNFPA in Jordan is working toward improving young people's ability to exercise Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in development and humanitarian settings in Jordan. Under the current country program (2018 - 2022) the youth program utilizes some approaches to empower young people to exercise their SRH rights<sup>6</sup>.

## EVIDENCE

- The dearth of communication between mothers and daughters on reproductive health issues
- Many topics, including marriage, pregnancy, sexual relations, and sexually transmitted diseases, were taboo during discussing between daughters and mothers.
- Lack of information available to parents about reproductive health and poor communication skills in this field
- Both mothers and daughters justified poor communication with mistrust; Mothers fear that “too much information” may encourage their daughters to engage in inappropriate behavior. Girls say they want to benefit their mothers, but are afraid to ask questions or reveal their personal interests; Fear of being punished
- Fathers believe that their teenage children should have knowledge of reproductive health issues, as most of them believe that giving their children this information does not contradict religious teachings, and does not expose children to engage in inappropriate behavior
- However, some of the fathers have discussed these issues with their male children superficially. fathers have discussed these issues with their make children with very little information.
- Some of the fathers have discussed reproductive health issues with their male children superficially.
- The science curriculum in schools includes some basic information about reproductive health. However, some teachers often skip this chapter on reproductive health.
- Students express interest in obtaining information about sexual and reproductive health
- Although teachers emphasized the importance of teaching adolescents about reproductive health topics, they did not feel comfortable or knowledgeable enough to teach these topics, especially to students of the opposite sex.

<sup>5</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.hpc.org.jo/sites/default/files/Youth%20Friendly%20Reproductive%20Health%20Services.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Retrieved from <https://jordan.unfpa.org/en/node/22551>

- Some of the female adolescents admitted that they had been sexually harassed, and did not tell anyone because they did not know and feared
- Adolescents wished to obtain information on how to maintain their health and safety, and preferred to obtain this information from trusted, older persons, including parents, teachers, and health care providers, but female adolescents preferred teachers and HCPs and feel embarrassed with the mothers.
- Many questions concern young people regarding reproductive health, but they rarely get an adequate answer from adults, so they turn to the Internet

## Analysis of the situation

### Adolescents

#### Male adolescents

- Male adolescents were more open in speaking and emphasized that they had the right to know all aspects related to sexual and reproductive health.
- Male adolescents asserted the information given in the school is scarce and only covers scientific material related to biology such as hormones and their effect on the body, growth, and reproductive system. Sometimes, in Islamic education course, matters related to purity, what necessitates ablution, and the correct method of washing are discussed.
- The males reported that if they had any inquiries about their sexual health, some of them would ask the father or the older brother, if any, and there were few of them who had conversations about the father's question and said they could go back to friends and ask them
- The participants confirmed that all information is available online and there is no need for it to be explained in schools. If they need any question, they will search for it on Google, and everyone has a net.

#### Female adolescents

- Adolescent girls expressed their desire to know about sexual matters that could affect their health and the practices that resulted in harm, but within what is permitted within the family, customs, and traditions
- Some teenage girls reported that they were ashamed to ask the mother or the teacher about some sexual matters. While some answered that they got some knowledge from the mother, and some reported that the mother did not talk to the girl about any sexual topic, because they thought that the school covered these topics.



- In the school, the social worker collectively talked about the menstrual cycle and how the girl takes care of herself during this period. A lesson in science for the ninth grade was talking about the reproductive system of women, and the Islamic education subject discussed some issues that require washing and purification.
- The girls decided that the teacher should talk to them about sexual health in groups and not individually because this reduces embarrassment and encourages the girls to ask, while when talking to the mother the girls feel shy and the mother is unable to give all the scientific information
- When asking girls about sexual harassment, not everyone had knowledge about sexual harassment and its types, how a girl should act and who to tell. There were some cases of a girl being subjected to a form of sexual harassment from the males around her, but she did not speak or tell anyone
- The girls listed the topics that they need to learn about, namely puberty, menstruation care, how to behave when experiencing sexual harassment. When asked about contraceptives, they answered that at this age they do not need this information because it is only for married couples
- For sexual relations, they answered that it should be within a legal framework, which is marriage. In Jordanian society, there are no permissible relations between both sex outside of marriage, and that a girl can be punished with death

### Guardians (Parents)

- The mothers stated that the school should have a primary role in educating adolescents about sexual and reproductive health issues, and they are the best able to deliver the correct information, but the topics presented should be in line with our religious beliefs and Arabic culture.
- Fathers stressed that awareness of sexual matters is necessary, especially since all information has become accessible to teenagers and the internet is another world and very dangerous if the teenager searches in it. Information through the school is safer and better
- The mothers expressed that the topics for education should include physical changes at this stage, personal hygiene, signs of puberty, and masturbation and its impact on health.
- Fathers supported that the topics for discussion should include all aspects of sexual and reproductive health in line with our religious beliefs and culture.
- Until now, we cannot consider that the school has a major role in educating adolescents about aspects of sexual health. In general, there are no sexual and reproductive health services for adolescents in Jordan.

- During the COVID-19 quarantine, teens did not have any questions for parents regarding sexual health.

## Teachers

- There are some topics related to sexual and reproductive health present in the curriculum, but they are limited and brief
- Some teachers, on their own initiative, address some issues of sexual health because they believe that adolescents need to be educated in these subjects, but these are individual cases.
- Teachers need to be prepared and trained so that the information is delivered to the students correctly
- There must be a prepared curriculum supervised by the Ministry of Education, and it must be unified in all schools in the Kingdom, provided that the Ministry provides all training tools such as boards, short films and brochures.
- It would be a good idea if the Ministry of Education created a website affiliated with it, and the student could access it, browse it, and obtain the required information, after the student received an introduction to the website and a detailed explanation of the topics on the website by the schoolteacher.
- The curriculum prepared for sexual and reproductive health must be prepared by Jordanian authors and not taken from foreign websites, and it must be sensitive to the Islamic religion and Jordanian values and customs.

## IMPLICATION

Adopting a policy in sexual and reproductive health education for youth in Jordan have the following implications:

- To prepare programs that contribute to providing the parents with knowledge and skills so that they can provide their children with information about sexual and reproductive Health.
- The Ministry of Education should give priority to reproductive health education in schools by providing visual aids and training courses to prepare teachers to better deliver reproductive health curricula.
- The media can contribute to emphasizing the importance of discussing reproductive health issues for youth in order to prevent engaging in risky behaviors
- Educational program for female youth should be developed to orient them to various type of violence.

## CONCLUSION

As has been said, “Better late than never”, It was clear that there is a need for sexual and reproductive health for mid adolescents. Moreover, trained parents and teachers are missing to support sexual education in the schools. Policies to support SRH&RR are required especially for youth. In conclusion action is required by all concerned to make the situation better.

## ANNEXES

### Participants Information Sheet

#### Participant information sheet

##### Study title

#### Experiences and Perceptions of mid adolescents, parents and teachers on comprehensive sexuality education: A multiple country based qualitative research study

##### Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part.

##### What is the purpose of the study?

You are being invited to participate in a research project conducted by Hala Bawadi, an associate professor at The University of Jordan. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences, perceptions and knowledge accessibility of mid adolescents aged between 14 to 17, parents and teachers regarding school-based comprehensive sexuality education.

##### Why have I been invited?

You have been invited because you are an adolescent, or parents or teachers in Jordan, which is the target population for this study.

##### Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect you.

##### What will happen to me if I take part?

The experiences, perceptions and knowledge accessibility of adolescents, parents and teachers regarding school-based comprehensive sexuality education will be explored by conducting in-depth interviews. Each interview will be audiotaped and will take from 30 minutes to one hour to complete. Participants recruited to the study will be interviewed in their preferred language in their preferred area.

### What are the possible benefits of taking part?

You may not personally benefit from your participation but you can help us to improve school-based comprehensive sexuality education for adolescents in the future.

### Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

All information reviewed and collected will be held in the strictest confidence. Your name will be removed from all materials after each interview and interview material anonymized so that you cannot be identified. The researcher will take the responsibility for transcribing and translating the interviews but sections of translation will be checked for accuracy by another translator after removing your name. If this research is published, no information will identify you. Moreover, no one will have access to the interview information. Only the researcher will have access to the information provided in the study.

### What should I do if I want to take part?

If you are interested in participating in the study, please contact the researcher after taking your time to decide to participate on: 0799659401 or email her at ([h.bawadi@ju.edu.jo](mailto:h.bawadi@ju.edu.jo)). The researcher then will contact you by phone to answer any questions and arrange for the interview to take place.

### What will happen to the results of the research study?

Once the findings have been established, positive steps will be taken to put research into practice. Copies of the research findings will be distributed locally and nationally so that the policymakers to further youth-friendly advocacy and ensure full access to SRHR and CSE for the adolescents and youth as the universal access mechanism with concrete and concise recommendations based on findings on adolescent sexual needs. The knowledge product will be a written bulletin for the different key stakeholders and to be disseminated via several websites and one or more publications about the performed study.

### Contact for further information

If you have any question about the research and your participation, please contact

The researcher: Dr. Hala Bawad

The University of Jordan

Mobile: 0799659401

**Consent form**

**Participant information sheet**

**Study title**

**Experiences and Perceptions of mid adolescents, parents and teachers on comprehensive sexuality education: A multiple country based qualitative research study**

Name of Researcher: Hala Bawadi

Please initial box

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.

I agreed to take part in the above study.

Please tick box

**Yes      No**

I agree to the interview being audio tape recorded



I agree to the use of anonymized quotes in publication.



**Name of participant**

**Date**

**Signature**

**Name of researcher**

**Date**

**Signature**

## Guiding interview questions for Adolescents

### User: Adolescents (14-17)

- A. Respondent ID:**
- B. City:**
- C. Types of regions:** 1. Urban            2. Rural
- D. Gender:** 1. Male            2. Female
- E. Age:** 1. 14      2. 15            3. 16            4. 17
- F. Education:** 1. Primary (Class)    2. Secondary(Class)    3. Other(Specify)
- G. Interviewer ID:** .....
- H. Date of data collection:** .....

Question 1: Do the teachers teach about sexuality education in the classroom? (Probe, if yes, do they feel shy to teach; probe, deep conversation or knowledge sharing on sexuality education; probe, if no, how the teachers deal with the topic)

Question 2: Are the SE chapters covered in any examination at all? (Probe, if yes, what type of questions are covered there; probe, if no, what could be the main reason according to your opinion; probe, what could be the transformation needed; probe, the chapters should highlight aspects of relationships, manifestations of violence, positive attributes of relationships and body rights)

Question 3: What is your opinion about gender norms or attitude? (Probe, opinion on gender diversity; probe, opinion on assuring sexuality education in gender diversity) un applicable in Jordan

Question 4: What is your opinion of assuring sexuality education to unmarried people? (Probe, do you think that it should be provided to everyone before marriage; probe, if yes, why; probe, if no, why)

Question 5: During the COVID-19 situation during lockdown and beyond, have you been able to get the information and education of sexuality on the classes?

Question 6: What barriers, challenges have you experienced while taking knowledge, lessons or information of CSE in the class or educational institute? (Probe: for types of access and other barriers; probe whether there were any influencing factors that hindered accessing CSE knowledge such as shy/discomfort or anything)

Question 7: Which are the ways that you have dealt with barriers, challenges during the classes? (Probe for ways to reach/get services, change in type of contraception, no contraception)

Question 8: As an adolescent, did you observe specific measures taken by your guardians or teachers to access CSE? (Probe for type of measures they taken and implemented, probe for their attitude/feeling towards these measures, probe for any measure that are uncomfortable for you/or negative impact)

Question 9: i) In your opinion, are there additional measures you would have preferred or wanted from your guardians? (Probe for type of measures, reason for preference of this measures, probe for challenges/barriers of taking those additional measures)

ii) Regulating bodies or educational authority (The government, Ministry of education, NCTB, local and CSE/SRHR based Non-Governmental Organizations, World Health Organization) (probe for type of measures, actors' reasons for preference of these measures, probe for any other challenges after taking additional initiatives)

**Table 1: General list of probing phrases that will be applied**

Why is this important?
Could you give me an example?
How so?
Tell me more
How do you feel about this?
Can you say something about ....?
Nods head and remains silent
Nods head in agreement
Do you have anything more to add?
Why do you think this matter?
What would you like to see happen?
When was the last time ....?
It sounds like you are implying....
What makes you prefer...

**Finally, thank the respondents and reassure them that the information provided by them will remain completely confidential.**



## Guiding interview questions for Guardians

## User: Guardians (28-52)

<b>A. Respondent ID:</b>
<b>B. City</b>
<b>C. Types of region:</b> 1 Urban      2. Rural
<b>D. Gender:</b> 1. Male      2. Female
<b>E. Age:</b> 1. 28-35                      2.36-43                      3.44- 52
<b>F. Education:</b> 1. No institutional education    2. Primary    3. Secondary    4. College
5. University                      6. Other (Specify) .....
<b>G. Profession:</b> 1. Home Maker      2. Part time employment      3. Full time Employment
4. Independent business    5. Student/School                      6. Others (Specify) .....
<b>H. Marital status:</b> 1. Married    2. Unmarried      3. Single      4.No reply
<b>I. Interviewer ID:</b> .....
<b>J. Date of data collection:</b> .....

Question 1: Do you support relationship of your children? (Probe, if yes, why do you support it; probe, if no, why do you think it is not good; probe, belief or understanding about the legality of CSE; probe if not interested to tell, ask perception-more) unapplicable in Jordan

Question 2: Do the teachers should teach about sexuality education in the classroom? (Probe, what changes needed in the classroom; deep conversation or knowledge sharing on sexuality education; probe, if no, how the topics should be dealt with)

Question 3: Do you think that, the SE chapters should cover in any examination? (Probe, if yes, what type of questions/topics are covered there; probe, if no, the reason not to cover it; probe, what could be the transformation needed; probe, the chapters should highlight aspects of relationships, manifestations of violence, positive attributes of relationships, body rights or any other else)

Question 4: What is your opinion about gender norms or attitude? (Probe, opinion on gender diversity; probe, opinion on assuring sexuality education in gender diversity) unapplicable in Jordan to ask about gender diversity

Question 5: What is your opinion of assuring sexuality education to unmarried people? (Probe, do you think that it should be provided to everyone before marriage; probe, if yes, why; probe, if no, why)

Question 6: During the COVID-19 situation during lockdown and beyond and according to the adolescent's needs of SE, did you able to provide the information and education of sexuality? (Probe, whether she has changed her mind setup because of COVID situation; probe, if no, what she/he takes decision regarding it)

Question 7: Except educational institute, do they should understand and teach sexuality education? (Probe, if yes, the types of institution; probe, if no, how they can learn those things then)

Question 8: What barriers, challenges have you experienced while providing knowledge, lessons or information of CSE at home? (Probe: for types of access and other barriers; probe whether there were any influencing factors that hindered accessing CSE knowledge such as shy/discomfort or anything)

Question 9: what kind of barriers, challenges the teachers have experienced while providing knowledge, lessons or information of CSE at the institutions? (Probe: for types of access and other barriers; probe whether there were any influencing factors that hindered accessing CSE knowledge such as shy/discomfort or anything)

Question 8: Which are the ways that you have dealt with barriers, challenges while discussing at home? (Probe for ways to reach/get information)

Question 9: As a guardian, did you observe specific measures taken by the teachers or the school authority to access CSE? (Probe for type of measures they taken and implemented, probe for their attitude/feeling towards these measures, probe for any measure that are uncomfortable for you/or negative impact)

Question 10: i) In your opinion, are there additional measures you would have preferred or wanted from the adolescent? (Probe for type of measures, reason for preference of this measures, probe for challenges/barriers of taking those additional measures)

ii) Regulating bodies or educational authority (The government, Ministry of education, NCTB, local and CSE/SRHR based Non-Governmental Organizations, World Health Organization) (probe for type of measures, actors' reasons for preference of these measures, probe for any other challenges after taking additional initiatives)

**Table 1: General list of probing phrases that will be applied**

Why is this important?
Could you give me an example?
How so?
Tell me more
How do you feel about this?
Can you say something about ....?
Nods head and remains silent
Nods head in agreement
Do you have anything more to add?
Why do you think this matter?
What would you like to see happen?
When was the last time ....?
It sounds like you are implying....
What makes you prefer...

**Finally, thank the respondents and reassure them that the information provided by them will remain completely confidential.**

## Guiding interview questions for Teacher

## User: Teacher (28-52)

- A. Respondent ID:
- B. City:
- C. Types of regions: 1 Urban 2. Peri-Urban 3. Rural
- D. Gender: 1. Male 2. Female
- E. Age: 1. 28-35 2. 36-43 3. 44- 52
- F. Education: 1. Bachelor's degree 2. Master's degree 3. PhD degree
- G. Marital status: 1. Married 2. Unmarried 3. Single
- H. Interviewer ID: .....
- I. Date of data collection: .....

Question 1: Do you teach sexuality education in class? (Probe, what topics to which class; probe, do they only follow the textbooks; probe, if no, then what other materials are used; probe, are the topics integrated with other subjects)

Question 2: How are the lessons designed and taught? (Probe, do they withhold sensitive information; probe, do they use inclusive language; probe, do they factor in local/religious beliefs)

Question 3: Is CSE for adolescents important? (Probe, why or why not; probe about sexual violence, consent, contraception, etc)

Question 4: How do you handle CSE-related questions from your students? (Probe, are they understanding and non-judgmental; probe, do they respond respectfully; probe, do they hide a student's keep personal information; probe, do they allow students to express their opinions freely in class)

Question 5: What is your opinion about sexuality education for unmarried people? (Probe, do you support it; probe, why or why not; probe, do you think it should be provided to everyone before marriage; probe, Why or why not)

Question 6: What challenges have you faced while delivering knowledge to your students in class? (Probe, types of challenges; probe, their reasons; probe, is there discomfort in the teacher)

Question 7: How do you handle challenges or barriers while delivering CSE? (Probe, do you receive support from the school or parents; probe, how do you get the supports you need)

Question 8: In your opinion, are there additional measures you would like to have from the (i) school administration, parents, and (ii) Regulating bodies and educational authority? (Probe, what kinds of measures; probe, how should the measures be implemented, preference for measures)

Question 9: As a teacher, did you observe specific measures taken by the teachers or the school authority to access CSE? (Probe for type of measures they taken and implemented, probe for their attitude/feeling towards these measures, probe for any measure that are uncomfortable for you/or negative impact)

**Table 1: General list of probing phrases that will be applied**

Why is this important?
Could you give me an example?
How so?
Tell me more
How do you feel about this?
Can you say something about ....?
Nods head and remains silent
Nods head in agreement
Do you have anything more to add?
Why do you think this matter?
What would you like to see happen?
When was the last time ....?
It sounds like you are implying....
What makes you prefer...

**Finally, thank the respondents and reassure them that the information provided by them will remain completely confidential.**