

The Understanding of Difference between Sex and Gender among Secondary Level Students in Nepal

Rupashree Niraula

National Human Rights Commission of Nepal, Lalitpur, Nepal

Email: rupashreeniraula90@gmail.com

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Abstract

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) which Nepal is a signatory of, identifies sexuality education as a human right. Right to comprehensive sexuality education is also protected by many other international human right treaties. Sexuality education, which is crucial among adolescents, is a vast subject and awareness of the difference between sex and gender is the initial and the most important part of sexuality education. Learning about the differences in gender and sexual identities and respecting those differences can put children in much safer place, less vulnerable of physical and mental exploitations and also make children aware of right against gender based violence, sexual abuse, exploitation and harmful practices. The study particularly focuses on finding out if the senior most students of school are aware about the basic part of sexuality education, i.e. the difference between sex and gender. The data and information required for the study was collected through survey questionnaire and on desk text books' content review. The survey required for this study was done from January till February of 2020. The major findings of the study reveal that the students of secondary level have heard teachers and seniors talk about sex and gender often but have not actually understood those words and the education curriculum also seem insufficient and ineffective in dealing with topics of sex and gender. The finding of this study shows that approximately 19% of the total respondents had some level of understanding of the difference between sex and gender. Through this study one can get an idea on how ineffective and insufficient the curriculum and content are when it comes to sexuality education because the senior most students of schools are unaware about the basic topic which falls under sexuality education, i.e. understanding the difference between sex and gender.

Keywords

Education, Gender, Sex, Sexuality, Human Rights, Nepal

1. Introduction

Sexuality education is a human right and learning about the differences between sex and gender is the basic part of sexuality education. Good quality sexuality education is grounded in internationally accepted human rights, in particular the right to access appropriate health-related information. This right has been confirmed by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child “Adolescents have the right to access adequate information essential for their health and development and for their ability to participate meaningfully in society. It is the obligation of States parties to ensure that all adolescent girls and boys, both in and out of school, are provided with, and not denied, accurate and appropriate information on how to protect their health and development and practise healthy behaviours. This should include information on the use and abuse, of tobacco, alcohol and other substances, safe and respectful social and sexual behaviours, diet and physical activity.” (CRC/GC/2003/4, para 26), the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (General recommendation No. 28 on the core obligations of States parties under article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women), the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (“The Committee interprets the right to health, as defined in article 12.1, as an inclusive right extending not only to timely and appropriate health care but also to the underlying determinants of health, such as [...] access to health-related education and information, including on sexual and reproductive health”). (Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment No. 14, para. 11), and also in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 25—Health, United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities)¹.

There is no doubt about the fact that sexuality education is a human right. Awareness of the difference between sex and gender is the initial and the most important part of sexuality education but the reality in Nepal is that, both teachers and students feel ashamed and are hesitant to talk about issues related to sexuality. Teaching sexual health is often very poor, which is directly associated with teacher’s embarrassment, lack of knowledge and poor teaching techniques. In addition, teachers are also confused as existing courses are insufficient to address young people’s need (Pokharel, Kulczycki, & Shakya, 2006).

In one of the online available contents of Social Studies subject of grade 9 of Nepal, under the chapter, “We and Our Community”, gender identity has been

¹https://www.euro.who.int/data/assets/pdf_file/0008/379043/Sexuality_education_Policy_brief_No_1.pdf Accessed on 13 Feb, 2021.

mentioned as one of our identities. Gender identity has been discussed along with other identities such as national identity, lingual identity, religious identity etc. The exact text of gender identity in the online platform is as follows:

“Gender Implies to women, men, and transgender (TG). Even TG has various names as their local context or country to country. TG refers to female to men, men to female and Hijara. At the mean time in Nepal, the representative society called BDS (Blue Diamond Society) called LGBTI largely. It covers lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and inter-sex persons, neither of whom falls under category of male, and female. Nepal is a country where females are treated equally. Even there is constitutional provision not to treat females discriminating rather enforced to treat equally and even provided with quotes. Talking about Hindu Religion, females have been specially valued and duly respected. For e.g. Goddess Laxmi, Sworswoti, Kali etc.”².

The text above though full of words related to sexual and gender identity, completely misses to define what gender identity actually is. To expect children to understand gender identity as one of our identities with the help of content mentioned above would be a mistake. Almost all the sentences in the text create confusion. Although gender identity has been given equal importance as other identities like national, lingual and religious identities but the content of gender identity is dreadfully confusing. Particularly the sentence “It covers lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and inter-sex persons, neither of whom falls under category of male, and female’ is wrong. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) answering one of the frequently asked question, writes” “Gay” means you are attracted to people of the same sex, “Lesbian” means you are a female who is attracted to other females. “Bisexual” means you are attracted to people of both sexes³. The description given by ACOG clarifies that Lesbian, gay, bisexuals do fall under categories of male and female.

Coming across the above mentioned content on gender identity was the main reason behind this study. Understanding sex and gender is crucial in one’s development. Understanding and respecting differences in gender and sexual identities can put children in a safer place, far from exploitation. This study has explored the content of Social Studies and Environment, Health and Population of grade 9 and 10 to analyze how the text books have incorporated the topics of sex and gender and try to find the answer to what extent these books have been able to make the students understand the difference between sex and gender.

According to the revised edition of International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (ITGSE) developed to assist education, health and other relevant authorities in the development and implementation of school-based and out-of-school comprehensive sexuality education programmes and materials, children of age 5 to 8 should be able to understand the difference between sex

²<https://www.kullabs.com/classes/subjects/units/lessons/notes/note-detail/3386> Accessed 22 December, 2019.

³<https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/lgbtq-teens> Accessed 27 December, 2019.

and gender. By the age of 15, children should be able to know what gender roles and gender norms are and how gender norms can be harmful and negatively influence people's choices and behavior. Children of age 15 to 18 should be able to fully understand gender bias against people of diverse sexual orientation and sexual identity (UNESCO, 2018).

1.1. The Difference between Sex and Gender

Human beings are both biological and social beings. People are born with some traits and as they grow up they acquire some traits. The traits they are born with tend to remain mostly permanent and these traits are mostly physical. The traits they learn as they grow up are not as permanent as the physical traits they are born with. People learn these traits through socialization. Sex is a biological trait and gender is a social trait.

According to Stoller, Sex is a biological ascription whereas gender is the result of psychological factors (Stoller, 1968). Okaley says that sex is a biological term and gender is a cultural term. People are born with a particular biological sex, but gender is a social and cultural construction, and it develops in the individual through social processes. Gender is learned. The individual develops their gender and their gendered identity through social and personal interactions (Okaley, 1972). Similarly Unger and Crawford discuss that sex is taken as a biological property (e.g., maleness and femaleness). Gender is taken as a cultural-societal property (e.g., masculinity/femininity) (Unger and Crawford, 1993). In simple words Johnson, Greaves and Repta explain that simply sex refers to biological differences, whereas gender refers to social differences (Greaves, Greaves, & Repta, 2009).

According to plannedparenthood.org, sex is a label that's usually first given by a doctor based upon the genes, hormones, and body parts (like genitals) you're born with. It goes on your birth certificate and describes your body as female or male. Some people's sex doesn't fit into male or female, called intersex. Gender is how society thinks we should look, think, and act as girls and women and boys and men. Each culture has beliefs and informal rules about how people should act based on their gender. For example, many cultures expect and encourage men to be more aggressive than women⁴.

The World Health Organization (WHO) refers gender to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men, such as norms, roles, and relationships of and between groups of women and men. It varies from society to society and can be changed. Gender refers to the roles, behaviours, activities, attributes and opportunities that any society considers appropriate for girls and boys, and women and men. Gender interacts with, but is different from, the binary categories of biological sex⁵. To summarize, sex and gender are two different types of identities having different characteristics. One is biologically constructed and

⁴<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/teens/all-about-sex-gender-and-gender-identity>

Accessed 27 December, 2019.

⁵<https://www.who.int/health-topics/gender> Accessed 29 December, 2019.

other is socially and culturally constructed.

1.2. Some Important Definitions Related to Gender and Sexual Identities

The UN Free and Equal, United Nation's Global Campaign against Homophobia and Transphobia has defined important words which describe gender and sexual identities. According to the UN Free and Equal, "LGBT stands for "lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender"; "LGBTI" for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex". While these terms have increasing resonance, different cultures use different terms to describe people who have same-sex relationships or who exhibit non-binary gender identities (such as hijra, meti, lala, skesana, motsoalle, mithli, kuchu, kawein, travesty, muxé, fa'afafine, fakaleiti, hamjensgara and two-spirit).

Transgender (sometimes shortened to "trans") is an umbrella term used to describe a wide range of identities whose appearance and characteristics are perceived as gender atypical—including transsexual people, cross-dressers (sometimes referred to as "transvestites"), and people who identify as third gender. Transwomen identify as women but were classified as males when they were born, transmen identify as men but were classified female when they were born, while other trans people don't identify with the gender-binary at all. Some transgender people seek surgery or take hormones to bring their body into alignment with their gender identity; others do not.

Intersex people are born with physical or biological sex characteristics, such as sexual anatomy, reproductive organs, hormonal patterns and/or chromosomal patterns, which do not fit the typical definitions of male or female. These characteristics may be apparent at birth or emerge later in life, often at puberty. Intersex people can have any sexual orientation and gender identity.

Sexual orientation refers to a person's physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction towards other people. Everyone has a sexual orientation, which is part of their identity. Gay men and lesbians are attracted to individuals of the same sex as themselves. Heterosexual people are attracted to individuals of a different sex from themselves. Bisexual (sometimes shortened to "bi") people may be attracted to individuals of the same or different sex. Sexual orientation is not related to gender identity and sex characteristics.

Gender identity reflects a deeply felt and experienced sense of one's own gender. Everyone has a gender identity, which is part of their overall identity. A person's gender identity is typically aligned with the sex assigned to them at birth. Transgender (sometimes shortened to "trans") is an umbrella term used to describe people with a wide range of identities—including transsexual people, cross-dressers (sometimes referred to as "transvestites"), people who identify as third gender, and others whose appearance and characteristics are seen as gender atypical and whose sense of their own gender is different to the sex that they were assigned at birth. Trans women identify as women but were classified as

males when they were born. Trans men identify as men but were classified female when they were born. Cisgender is a term used to describe people whose sense of their own gender is aligned with the sex that they were assigned at birth. Gender identity is distinct from sexual orientation and sex characteristics.

Gender expression is the way in which we express our gender through actions and appearance. Gender expression can be any combination of masculine, feminine and androgynous. For a lot of people, their gender expression goes along with the ideas that our societies deem to be appropriate for their gender. For other people it does not. People whose gender expression does not fit into society's norms and expectations, such as men perceived as "feminine" and women perceived as "masculine" often face harsh sanctions, including physical, sexual and psychological violence and bullying. A person's gender expression is not always linked to the person's biological sex, gender identity or sexual orientation.

Homophobia is an irrational fear of, hatred or aversion towards lesbian, gay or bisexual people. Transphobia is an irrational fear, hatred or aversion towards transgender people. Biophobia is an irrational fear, hatred or aversion towards bisexual people⁶.

2. Methods

This article is based on primary as well as secondary sources of information. Through electronic database and web-sites the literature searches were conducted. The information on the understanding of sex and gender among secondary level students was collected through a questionnaire consisting 3 questions, 2 of which were follow up questions of the 1st question. Detail on the questionnaire is discussed in the findings part. Because the purpose of this study was to test the basic understanding of the difference between sex and gender among students, the need to add more question seemed irrelevant at this stage. The sampling method used was convenience sampling and the sample size was 80. All the students were of secondary level, i.e. class 9 and 10. Considering the years spent in schools, age, experience and exposure with varied topics, this group of school going students were selected for the survey. The students were from private schools belonging to different parts of the country. This study has also analyzed the content of two subjects taught in the secondary level, Social Studies and Health, Population and Environment as these subjects have incorporated the content of society, health and population.

The reason to analyze these text books was to understand the source of information among students regarding the understanding of sex and gender and also to identify the sufficiency of the content in text books dealing with topics of sex and gender. This exploratory study has used both quantitative and qualitative methods as the data is gathered through questionnaire as well as through analyzing the content of two above mentioned text books of each class.

⁶<https://www.unfe.org/definitions/> Accessed 20 October, 2020.

3. Findings and Discussion

The questionnaire consisted of only 3 questions. The first question was a close ended one which asked if the respondents knew the difference between sex and gender. The respondents had to tick the given “yes” or “no” option. The second question was an open ended question which asked the respondents to explain the difference between sex and gender provided they had ticked on the “yes” option of the first question. The third question was a multi select multiple choice question which asked the respondents to tick multiple answer options regarding the source of information (facebook, television, friends, family, text books etc.) through they got to know the difference between sex and gender. Based on these questions and text books’ content review the findings were as follows:

1) Respondents’ awareness on the difference between sex and gender:

Out of the 80 respondents, 60 respondents said they were aware about the difference between sex and gender. But not all of them could explain the difference between the two. There were 15 students among those 60 respondents who were able to blurrily explain the difference. There were no respondents who could clearly explain the difference between sex and gender. Only 1 among the 15 students has mentioned intersex as a sex category along with male and female. 19 among the 60 respondents have explained gender categories as male and female and have skipped explaining the sex part. 26 among the 60 respondents have explained sex as a verb, the physical intercourse, and gender as the difference between male and female. The above data shows that approximately 19% of the total respondents had some level of understanding of the difference between sex and gender. A whopping 81% did not know the difference. Among the total respondents only 1 had mentioned intersex as a sex category. None of the respondents had clear idea about the understanding of sex and gender (**Figure 1**).

2) Source of information on sex and gender:

Out of the 15 students who have tried to explain the difference, only 5 of them have mentioned text books as the source of information through which they got to know about the difference between sex and gender. Among those who have tried to explain 56% have mentioned Facebook and television as the source of

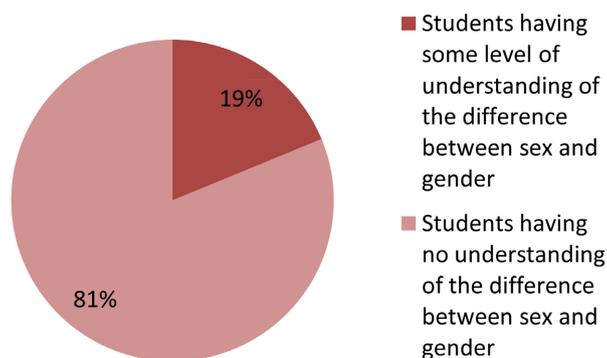


Figure 1. Understanding of difference between sex and gender among students.

information through which they got to know about the difference between sex and gender. 27% have mentioned friends as the source. According to Nepal Demographic and Health Survey 2006, four out of five adolescents get sexual knowledge from their friends (MOHP Nepal, New ERA, and Macro International Inc, 2007). Only 17% have mentioned text books. Looking at the data we can clearly establish that only a handful of students understand that sex and gender are two different identities. And text books do not seem to be helpful in making students understand the basics of sex and gender. Social media and television on the other hand seem to be effective than text books. There are not enough audiovisual materials to teach sex education programme in Nepalese schools. Teachers have to rely on a textbook which hinders the effective teaching of sex education (Figure 2).

Surprisingly no respondents mentioned teachers as a source of information. A big reason behind it could be the lack of interaction between teachers and students regarding topics of sexuality. Often teachers and students both feel embarrassed to discuss matters related to sexual and reproductive health. School teachers lack knowledge on sexuality, so they often try to skip chapters and discussions on sexuality. There is evidence that sex education can be ineffective whenever teachers lack confidence and up-to-date knowledge and therefore lose credibility with pupils (Lowden and Powney, 1994). A study conducted by Nepal Society of Obstetricians and Genealogists (NESOG) in 2012 shows that 86% of teachers claim that school is not the appropriate place to teach about sex (Nepal Society of Obstetricians and Genealogists, 2008). Most Nepalese teachers, from both government and private schools, are reluctant to discuss sex education. Improving teachers' training and skills is particularly successful in boosting the confidence of those teachers who think that delivery of sex education curricula as most challenging (Dev, Teijlingen, Edwin and Simkhada, 2010). In a study in 2002 among adolescents in eight schools in the Nawalparasi District in the Western Region of Nepal, eight teachers responsible for teaching the subject Health, Population and Environment were interviewed. Survey data was collected from 451 students and four focus group discussions with 26 of the students were carried. The study found that adolescents in those eight schools did not appear to be getting the information they needed. Most of the teachers did not want to deal with sensitive topics and feared censure by their colleagues and society.

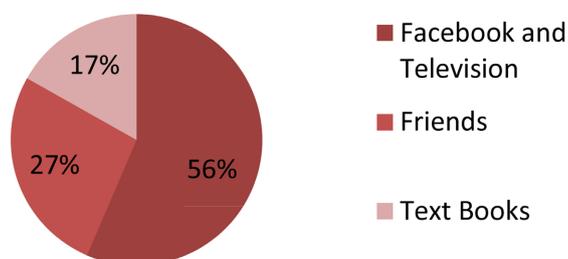


Figure 2. Source of information in understanding the difference between sex and gender.

Some lacked the skills to give such instruction. Many students also felt uncomfortable with the topics. The study shows that the challenge is to strengthen sex education, make it more appropriate for the students and ensure that teachers are more comfortable and able to give instruction on the topic (Pokharel, Kulczycki, & Shakya, 2006).

United Nations Population Fund along with the Ministry of Education, Nepal had conducted a review of curricula in the context of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in the year 2014. CSE provides a full range of information, skills and values to enable young people to informed choices about their health and sexuality. It is rights-based, age appropriate and gender-sensitive education that covers six key concepts as per International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education. According to the review, teachers with relevant academic qualification majors (Health and Physical Education; Population Studies by Tribhuvan University) were in decreasing trend and were often seen teaching different subjects. The review suggests that teacher training is a critical component of CSE implementation. Teachers who run CSE classes must have adequate training to deliver all components of CSE education using the right pedagogic techniques. Findings from the desk review show that the most concerning gap in CSE implementation is the lack of trained teachers delivering CSE⁷.

3) Text books' content review

Going through the text books, one can understand why text books are not a reliable source of information among students when it comes to the subject of sex and gender. The text books have used the terms sex and gender repeatedly but the content appear very confusing. Below are some examples of such content.

a) Content no 1

The scope of sexuality is broad. The education programme related to sexuality and its biological, social, cultural, psychological and emotional aspects is comprehensive sex education. Sexual and reproductive health, gender, reproductive rights, diversity, pleasure and relationship are the components of comprehensive sex education. It shows the broadness of sex education (Karn & Acharya, 2017).

Review: In the above content from the subject Basic Health, Population and Environment Education of Grade 9, under the topic Sex Education, the scope of sexuality has been discussed but the entire content has missed out on defining sexuality. The word sexuality has been used multiple times but the meaning of sexuality has not been explored. In the entire chapter titled Adolescence, Sex and Reproductive Health Education the difference between sex and gender has not been discussed.

b) Content no 2

Gender refers to attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex. Gender identity refers to a personal identification with a particular gender and gender role in the society (Shah, Niroula, <https://nepal.unfpa.org/en/publications/review-curricula-context-comprehensive-sexuality-education-nepal> Accessed 30 September, 2020).

Vishwakarma and Timothy, 2017).

Review: In the above content from the subject Our Social Studies of Grade 9, under the topic Our Identity, gender identity has been discussed as one of the identities. Gender has been defined here as a culturally created identity based on biological sex. The topic though precise and relevant, seems insufficient as it has missed out explaining how gender identity can be different from biological identity, and what gender roles can be and how does culture create it. Few examples on gender roles could have made the topic clearer.

c) Content no 3

AIDs was first detected in the USA among the homosexuals. It was detected by Dr. Robert Gallo. Since then, it has been spreading rapidly throughout the world (Sherchan, Uprety, & Bishnu, 2017).

Review: In the above content from the subject Health, Population and Environment Education of Grade 10, under the chapter Adolescence, Sex and Reproductive Health Education of grade 10, sexually transmitted diseases have been discussed. The paragraph above has mentioned the term homosexual but nothing has been discussed on sexual orientation. One can only assume what homosexuals are if we look at the paragraph.

Going through the text books of grade 9 and 10, one can hardly find any content that focuses on explaining the difference between sex and gender. The three contents mentioned above evidently supports the analysis that contents are developed assuming students are already familiar with and are well aware of topics related to sexuality. But the data collected by this study paints a different picture. Students are unaware of the basic, the most important, and the initial topic that precedes all the other topics and contents of sexuality education, i.e. the difference between sex and gender. The design and structure of the current school sex education curriculum, which was updated in 2011, is considered to be inconsistent and ineffective in promoting sexual health at the adolescent age (Shrestha, Otsuka, Poudel, Yasuoka, Lamichhane, and Jimba, 2013). The Government's effort on addressing the need of sexuality education does not seem sufficient. In an attempt to address the Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) issues of adolescent, Government of Nepal implemented a five-year national programme in 2010, known as Nepal Health Sector Programme (NHSP), to provide adolescent-friendly sexual and reproductive health (ASRH) services (Mishra, 2017). The programme was carried out in the period of the Millennium Development Goals; however, it is in the essence of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 to emphasise the universal access to health care to everyone (UN, 2015). The Nepal Health Sector Programme (NHSP) is accompanied by a comprehensive sexuality education programme in schools as part of the national curriculum which was initiated amid 2002 and 2006. A mid-term evaluation of National Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health however suggests that there should be more coordination between the ASRH programme and school sex education programme to meet the demand for ASRH services among ado-

lescents (Baral, Khatri, Schildbach, Schmitz, Silwal, and Teijlingen, 2013). The review of curricula in the context of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Ministry of Education, Nepal in 2014 also shows that the inclusion of CSE topics in lower secondary and secondary levels in the formal school system in Nepal is encouraging even though it is not as comprehensive as given in the ITGSE. The study shows that Nepal has CSE related topics from grades 1 - 10 curricula that are to a large extent in line with the ITGSE but there are inconsistencies in the CSE topics and their links to each grade/age appropriateness, in the six major areas assessed: 1) relationships, 2) values, attitudes and skills, 3) culture, society and human rights, 4) human development, 5) sexual behavior and 6) sexual and reproductive health (Shrestha, Otsuka, Poudel, Yasuoka, Lamichhane, and Jimba, 2013).

Right to sexuality education has been protected by several human rights related documents such as Convention on the Rights of the Child; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Nepal is signatory of all of the above mentioned conventions. The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) 1994, which Nepal is a signatory of, identifies sexuality education as a human right, essential to development and human well-being. The ICPD Programme of Action states:

Support should be given to integral sexual education and services for young people, with the support and guidance of their parents and in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Educational efforts should begin within the family unit, in the community and in the schools at an appropriate age, but must also reach adults, in particular men, through non-formal education and a variety of community-based efforts. Governments, in collaboration with non-governmental organizations, are urged to meet the special needs of adolescents and to establish appropriate programmes to respond to those needs. Such programmes should include support mechanisms for the education and counselling of adolescents in the areas of gender relations and equality, violence against adolescents, responsible sexual behaviour, responsible family-planning practice, family life, reproductive health, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV infection and AIDS prevention⁸.

The right to comprehensive sexuality education is also recognized by global bodies like the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)⁹. Sexuality education is learning about mental, physical, emotional and social as-

⁸<https://www.unfpa.org/events/international-conference-population-and-development-icpd>
Accessed 11 February, 2021.

⁹<https://www.actioncanadashr.org/resources/sexual-health-info/sex-ed/sex-ed-human-right>
Accessed on 13 Feb, 2021.

pects of sexuality. One of the key concepts of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) is culture, society and human rights. The right against discrimination, the right to the highest attainable mental and physical health, right to information, and right to equality is some of the many rights from which right to sexuality education is derived. According to the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (ITGSE), CSE is rights-based, age appropriate and gender-sensitive education. One of the objectives of CSE programs is to empower young people to demand respect for their bodies and their rights and to fully and freely consent to relationships and sexual activity that is free of violence¹⁰. Sexual health education in school is regarded as an effective way to increase young people's understanding of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) including HIV (human immune deficiency virus) infection, unintended pregnancies and abortion, infertility and cancer (Gallant & Maticka-Tyndale, 2004). Despite limited research evidence of effect on improving sexual health outcomes, young people generally agree that secondary schools are suitable sites for sex education (Reeves, Whitaker, Parsonage, Robinson, Swale, & Bayley, 2006). A range of research evidence also indicates that school-based sex education has potential to prevent unwanted pregnancy and to promote positive sexual health at the individual, family and community or health system level (Butler, 2004; Saito, 1998).

The sexual and reproductive choices of young people can have a cascading effect on their human rights. Adolescent pregnancy, for example, can lead girls to drop out of school, which deprives them of their right to education. Poor understanding of gender equality can lead to discrimination. Comprehensive sexuality education empowers young people to know and demand their rights¹¹. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms." Taking into account how important sex education is in the development and well-being of children, sexuality education based on educational and scientific standards undoubtedly belongs to the scope of the knowledge which children should have guaranteed¹².

The data and information gathered through this study shows that there are some fundamental challenges in delivering content related to sexuality education in schools. Even though CSE related topics are found in text books from early grades to secondary level, students are unaware of basic CSE related information. How can one expect to empower young people to demand respect for their bodies and their rights if education providers themselves are inadequately informed and updated about basics of sexuality education? The unawareness of the difference between sex and gender among secondary level students is reflective

¹⁰<https://iwhc.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/cse-english-fullversion.pdf> Accessed on 11 Feb, 2021.

¹¹<https://www.unfpa.org/comprehensive-sexuality-education>, Accessed on 11 Feb, 2021.

¹²<https://adcmemorial.org/en/news/sexual-education-question-of-morality-or-a-human-right/> Accessed on 11 Feb, 2021.

of lack of qualified/trained teachers and insufficient, ineffective course content.

4. Conclusion

Article no 34 of the Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC) which Nepal is a party to, states that States Parties should undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse¹³. The Constitution of Nepal 2072, and Act Relating to Children, 2075 also talks about protection of children from sexual harassment and exploitation. Without sexuality education, protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse is difficult. Increasing number of hate crimes committed on sexual and gender minorities and news on homophobic, transphobic activities suggest the need of awareness, which can be achieved through sexuality education. Nepal has made commitment in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Goal no. 5 among the 17 goals of Sustainable Development Goals is Gender Equality¹⁴. To achieve gender equality the government needs to address a lot of pressing issues; citizenship rights, rights of sexual minorities, inclusion, pay and participation disparities, disproportionate leadership positions, patriarchal dominance in the government to name a few. Despite having one of the most progressive constitutions when it comes to rights of sexual minorities, there are plenty of areas the government needs to focus and prioritize. One of such areas is sexuality education.

Comprehensive Sexuality Education can create a significant difference when it comes to making children aware, skillful and bring about behavioral change regarding sexual and gender identities and help them make better health choices. Understanding sex and gender is the base of sexuality education. Through this study one can get an idea on how ineffective and insufficient the curriculum and content are when it comes to sexuality education because the senior most students of schools are unaware about the basic topic which falls under sexuality education, i.e. understanding the difference between sex and gender. The International Technical Guidelines on Sexuality Education which is based on CSE has recommended incorporating the topic of learning the difference between sex and gender in school curriculum in primary level where the age of students is between 5 to 8 years. The findings of this study suggest that the curriculum on sexuality education of Nepal needs to be thoroughly revised taking ITGSE based on CSE into consideration. As the current school sex education curriculum, which was updated in 2011, is found to be inconsistent and ineffective in promoting sexual health at the adolescent age, the revision of curriculum should be carried out immediately. Revisions need to timely and age appropriate as well. Teachers' training is as important as the revision of curriculum. Teachers' training should not only focus on delivering the course but also on building strong interpersonal relationship with the students and environment of trust and friendship, so that the students can comfortably discuss and share matters re-

¹³<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx> Accessed 30 September, 2020.

¹⁴<https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-5-gender-equality.html> Accessed 30 September, 2020.

lated to sexuality and sexual health. Because students these days have access to social media and television and the findings of the study also gives one an idea about how social media and television can be effective tools of education, the use of such media should also be explored and incorporated in the curriculum of sexuality education.

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Ethical Conduct of Research

I declare that this research has been conducted ethically.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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