

Appropriate age to deliver school-based sex education - earlier or later?

ABSTRACT

Aim: To explore the perspectives of Science teachers regarding appropriate age to deliver school-based sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education in secondary schools in the Klang-Valley, Malaysia. **Method:** A qualitative study using in-depth interview technique was conducted among science teachers in secondary schools in the Klang Valley. **Results:** A majority of participants believed that this course should be presented earlier than in Form Three because nowadays students mature earlier. These findings are also supported by the results of other studies where the target age for the introduction of SRH education by the majority of the teachers is between 10-14 years. This may be related to the fact that most adolescents have their first sexual intercourse before the age of 15 years when they are probably in lower secondary school. However, another group believed by introducing and teaching this course later, sexual curiosity and promiscuity of students could be reduced. **Conclusion:** This study highlighted the need to start sexual and reproductive health education at an earlier age than currently taught now, preferably in primary school. This is especially true when many students do not progress to secondary school education, and in places where fewer girls than boys progress to secondary school level. There is a need to revise the age at which sexual and reproductive health education is provided to students and the content of that education.

Keyword: Sex education; School; Science teachers; Age.