ABSTRACT

Reproductive health is defined as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes. Reproductive health education is defined as an age appropriate, culturally relevant approach to teaching individuals about sex and relationships using scientifically accurate, realistic, and non-judgmental information. Learning about reproductive health is a lifelong process but it should begin at an early stage in one's life. In Sri Lankan education system, reproductive health education mainly target the age group adolescents and youth because this is the period where people experience rapid physical and psychosocial growth.

The objective of this study is to assess reproductive health knowledge, attitudes and associated factors among government school teachers in Chilaw Educational Zone.

A cross sectional descriptive study was conducted among 423 government school teachers who teach science or health and physical education from Grade 6 to 11 in schools in Chilaw Educational Zone. The study participants were selected using simple random sampling method and a self-administered questionnaire was used for data collection. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences 21 (SPSS 21 package) and results were displayed in tables using numbers and percentages.

According to the results, most study participants were married (82.75%) females (69.5%) teachers in 31-40 year (58%) age category with 0-10 year service experience (64%). A large proportion of them were either trained/ Diploma holders (59.7%) or graduate (32.8%) teachers. Majority of them had good knowledge (66.4%) and a positive attitude (71.4%) towards providing RH information through schools. Their knowledge regarding structure and function of the reproductive system (89%); adolescence and puberty (72%); spermatogenesis and menstruation (49%); conception, pregnancy and abortion (50%); subfertility (62%); sexually transmitted infections (STIs) (73%) and contraception (89%) was also good.

Most of them have agreed that RH is something that should be learnt (94%) and taught (92%) by schools (99%). Out of respondents, 44% agreed that RH education should begin as early as possible at grade six.

Majority of them (70%) think that, higher priority should be given to RH education, compare to other subjects and 72% opinion was that it should be taught as a compulsory subject. Majority (83%) of them agreed that, reproductive health education should target students, teachers, parents and the whole community. Majority agrees that there will be reduction of teenage pregnancies (97.7%), pre-marital sex (83.5%), illegal abortions (93%) and sexually transmitted Infections (93.5%) if proper RH education was given in schools.

 Majority agreed that, RH education should include about structure and functions of male and female reproductive systems (89.5%), conception and pregnancy (89%), Sexually Transmitted Infections (98%), reproductive health promotion (89%) and contraception (72%).

Out of the participants, 86% of the participants referred to text books while 76% referred to teachers' guides and 56% referred to other subject materials published by Ministry of health and Ministry of Education for RH teaching. Fifty-seven percent (57%) of the participants referred to internet. Although 62% received RH knowledge during their training period, only 25% think those knowledges was adequate. They also think that number of in-service training programs on RH were not adequate. Only 52% of the participants periodically updated their RH knowledge.

Results of the study indicates that age, marital status, highest educational qualification and service duration of the respondents have a statistically significant association with the total reproductive health knowledge of the participants. Attitude of the respondents was associated with gender, age, highest educational qualification, service duration of the respondents as well as total knowledge of the respondents which are statistically significant.

Key Words;   Reproductive Health

                Knowledge

                Attitude