Reviewer's report

Title: Concerns and educational needs of Iranian parents regarding the sexual health of their male adolescents: a qualitative study

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Reviewer: Ilya Zukhov

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The paper is extremely interested and important, since it provides concrete recommendations for sexuality education programming and implementation in conservative environment of the I.R. of Iran.

This is important, that paper confirms, that fear of emotional and sexual harms exists among parents in Iran. Existing data tells us that approximately 20% of women, and between 5 and 10% of men, reported having been victims of sexual violence as children. WHO says that violence among young people, including dating violence is also a major problem. Since parents in Iran understand and accept this problem, it could be an entry point for involvement parents into sexuality education. Parents or guardians have a significant role in educating their children about sexuality. For Iran, where sexuality education is not provided in schools, parents/guardians and families bear most of the responsibility for providing it to their children. But parents often lack the competencies to do so, and results of this research confirm it for Iran as well. From other sources we know, that parent-focused interventions were found to be particularly effective, and many had positive effects on the young people's knowledge and attitudes and on their sexual behaviours, although the latter was inconsistent (though most of the researched up to date were conducted in the USA). In this regard it's important to know, that parents in Iran are dissatisfied with their lack of communication skills, that provides us with the evidence to implement sexuality education training for parents themselves. Additionally, parent-child communication may be especially important for condom use: research has found that parent-child discussions about condoms prior to sexual debut are beneficial and that condom use at first intercourse has been associated with a 20-fold increase in rates of continued regular condom use. Obvious, in Iran condom use can't be discussed at school at all, so parents could become a good source of information on it for their kids.

The paper flags necessity of training for teachers, that is crucial, since teachers are central to implement sexuality education. Teachers must be supported by a legal framework, as well as being trained and have access to training materials.

Technology can reduce common barriers to participation in group-based, multisession programmes, they can also allow for individualized and tailored messages and active learning. The impacts of technological advances and social media can also be seen in the way young people are accessing the Internet, and 'sex', 'sexuality' and 'how to have sex' have emerged as popular search terms. In the absence of accessible sexuality programmes, alternatives to the Internet are few. The potential uses of technology in contributing to the delivery of sexuality
education are generating significant interest, especially because many young people are already confident and frequent users of technology. Most experts believe that technology has the potential to transform the delivery of both education and health. The use of technology in sexuality education is at the crossroads of mHealth, which is the use of mobile and wireless technologies to support the achievement of health objectives, and electronic learning or e-learning, which is all types of training, education and instruction via a digital medium, such as a computer or mobile phone. Online education is when the learner connects to instruction and educational materials using the Internet. While the use of technology in sexuality education is often demand-driven, such as a response to a question posted by someone or a search for information about something the user wants to know, it can also provide structured programmes or components of programmes.

Authors referred to UNESCO guidance on sexuality education from 2009. However, this Guidance was revised and launched in 2018, and endorsed by 6 UN agencies - Revised UN ITGSE. I would strongly recommend to use language from this Guidance, which provides state of the art understanding of sexuality education, which is much more broader and comprehensive definition than "sexual health education". Or it's better to use "culture-appropriate" language, rather than "culture-based".

One of the main characteristics of successful implementation of sexuality education is meaningful youth participation. It would be interesting to know parents opinion about equal involvement of their children into sexuality education implementation.

Also it looks interesting for me to see discussion of differences in answers from mothers and fathers. Also interviews were conducted with 16 parents (9 women, 7 men) - does it mean female and male parents interviewed were not necessarily from the same families? Also should be clarified one more sentence - "we initially selected key informant parents...": does it mean that two school principals, one school teacher, one counselor and one nurse were among interviews parents? If so, 5 of 16 parents represented school's staff, that limits perceptions from parents.

One more thing to recommended from my side is to do a proof-reading once again. For example to say that parents need "to improve sexual communication with their adolescents" sounds very awkward and ambiguous.

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