

INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH REPORT

Student name: Myrna Morales

Student ID:1917110

Module name: Introduction to Research

Module code: BMHP5005

Lecturer name: Laila Sarani

1.INTRODUCTION	3
2.Background (Contextual) information.....	4
Rationale for selection of the research topic.....	4.1
3.Methodology and methods.....	5
Considerations of the importance of ethical practice	
In research.....	5
A published literature review	6
Discussion	7
4.Recommendations.....	8
5.Results.....	9
6. Conclusion.....	10
7.References.....	11

1. Introduction

Sexual health has over the years been defined in many different ways, which have continued to progress since the original definition was given by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1975. Expectations are that this progress will continue as cultural conversation on what constitutes sexual health continue to evolve. This also means that it is vital to consider the dangers of any attempts to establish norms of standards as well as a rigid objective definition of sexual health. This is so because doing so would result in the exclusion of some groups of people while others could be labelled unhealthy or abnormal. In 2002, the WHO defined sexual health as a state of physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being which related to sexuality. In this definition, WHO purposed that sexual health does not inherently refer to the absence of disease, dysfunction, or infirmity (World Health Organization, 2015)

Lottes (2013) defined sexual health as an approach to sexuality, which is founded in the accurate knowledge, self-acceptance, and personal awareness where an individual's values, emotions and behaviours are integrated and congruent within the individual's wider structured of personality and self-definition. It involves an ability to be sexually functional, to be able to communicate explicitly about sexual desires and needs and to act intentionally and responsibly while setting one's appropriate sexual boundaries. In this essence, sexual health entails a sense of self-esteem, personal competence and attractiveness, and being free from sexual dysfunction, sexually transmitted infections, and sexual exploitation or coercion. As these definitions indicate, there exist no single definition of sexual health which can be taken as a standard or benchmark, but rather there are many definitions which all revolve around what sexuality means to an individual, as well as what it means to an individual, as well as what it means for the correlation between the individual's sexuality and lack of problems with it.

2. Background (contextual) information

Sexual health makes up an important part of a person's physical and mental health. It is also a crucial part of how people identify themselves together with the fundamental human rights to privacy, having a family and living a life without being subjected to discrimination. As with other forms of health, sexual health entails the ability of an individual to understand and weigh the various risks and responsibilities as well as the results and effects that are attached to sexual actions. Sexual health includes aspects of individuals being free from sexual abuse, coercion and discrimination as well as the ability of these individuals to integrate their sexuality into their daily lives and get pleasure from that integration, or reproduce if they choose to do so. Since it is such a diverse area for research, most studies in this area are focused on specific niches such as gender-based violence (GBV), women's health issues and gender equality, self-care, and the role of culture in sexual health in general (Edwards and Coleman, 2004).

Sexual health is studied and used alongside other terms defined by sex, sexuality, and sexual rights. All these collectively entail a plethora of factors ranging from psychological, biological, sociocultural, economic, legal, political, spiritual, and religious factors which all interact to influence the behaviour of an individual and their outcome related to sexual health. Every culture has a different approach to sexual health in how people view themselves in comparison to others and their environments regarding their sexuality is also different. Most cultures have inbuilt systems of sexual health education and members learn about sexuality from early age. There is, however, the need to ensure that education of people about sexuality and sexual health does not aid in the development of a rigid structure where the people who do not fit within the social structure are regarded as outcasts (Epstein and Mamo, 2017).

Rationale for the selection of the research topic

It is important for people to learn about sexuality, especially in their early years. This early exposure to the topic allows for them to be aware of their responsibilities and the consequences of their engagement in sexual activities. The risks involved with sexuality include pregnancy, contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and sexual molestation or abuse, education should be provided as much as possible about sexual health because people are more informed about the topic have a better way of approaching life situations and thus, they can be ready to make

good choices when they have to. Researching about sexual health is justifiable for multiple reasons among these being the need to curb cases of gender-based violence meted on women mostly although men and boys also experience the same. In fact, the need to delegitimize the belief that women are the only victims of gender-based violence and sexual abused is a primary argument for the selection of sexual health as research topic (Epstein and Mamo,2017)

Additionally, there is need to focus research on issues regarding the role of culture in sexual health on the people. While this may be difficult due to the conservative nature of most communities when it comes to issues regarding sexuality, it is crucial to ensure that as many people are informed about their sexuality, sexual health, and the responsibilities, choices and they face should they engage in sexual activities. Sexual health is not issue that most people can manage on their own, especially because it evolves as one age and goes through new sets of experiences with their sexuality. Providing information to the masses at the appropriate stages of learning makes it possible for the individuals to identify their sexuality and behave accordingly, and in cultures where some sexual affiliations may be regarded as extreme and unwanted, they can learn from early on to find the most amicable support systems to align themselves with (Edwards and Coleman,2004). This would be very effective in helping avoid being sexually exploited,abused,or discriminated against.

3.Methodology and Methods

The methodology and methods used for collecting and analysing data in this research entail secondary data collection methods. A systematic review of published literature on the issue of sexual health, sexual rights and sexuality in general was conducted and a set of outcomes and recommendations provided. For this study, specific focus has been placed on the official definition of these terms by the WHO to follow through the evolution is directed towards projecting what to expect in the future regarding sexual health and what aspects of human daily lives it encompasses. Publications and public records providing the official definitions were accessed through the WHO (World Health organization's) own publications in addition to a list of literature sources from various academic libraries which provide

expounded definitions and contextual information on the same topic. Thus, the research approach for this study is non numerical and entirely qualitative with focus on how the topic of sexual health is defined and how these definitions impact people policies and legal frameworks associated with the research topic.

Consideration of the importance of ethical practice in research

Ethical considerations in research entail the set of rules and guidelines which researchers must consider in order to avoid potential harm to the research participants and researchers. While there are some research with characteristics that make it more sensitive to others, there are no general descriptions of what makes research sensitive except for the research involving topics whose experiences makes them sensitive. Sexual behaviors, drug and substance use, topics consider to be taboo in the specific communities where the participants are sourced from, and topics which arouse emotions are generally referred to as sensitive area of research. Within these topics, still, the level of sensitivity is dependent on various factors which include the age of participants, gender and sexual identity, and mental health conditions of the participants. Topics which involve violence and abuse are considered to be sensitive because they remind the participants, who may be victims of the violence and abuse, of the traumatic experiences they went through in the past (Shirmohammadi et al., 2018)

Research has to be conducted on the basis of ethical codes and principles which provide a guideline for the researchers to follow in order to avoid causing harm on the participants. Some of the ethical principles and codes include honesty, objectivity, integrity, carefulness confidentiality and informed consent. (Shirmohammadi et al., 2018). At all times, the participants should reserve the rights to end their participation in the study if they feel uncomfortable and if they feel that the study puts them and their property in danger. It is crucial to be honest and objective with participants when discussing the aspects of the research so that they will not have to experience unexpected elements of the research after they have given their consent to participate in the study. Researchers have a duty to do good and avoid doing what can cause harm on the participants (Shirmohammadi et al., 2018). This guided by the principles of beneficence and nonmaleficence which, in

the field of healthcare demand that for a researcher, the first duty is going well, followed by avoiding causing harm on individuals.

There are multiple reasons why ethical codes and principles are important in research. First of all, these are vital for the researcher to maintain the credibility of their research and that of the scientific community. They are also vital for the credibility of the results and for the people to accept for them, including how credible the scientific community deems the results of the study to be after they are published. Observing these ethics also plays a vital role in ensuring that the research ends in positive outcomes for the participants.(Shirmohammadi et al.,2018)

A published literature reviews

Gruskin et al., (2019) asserts that showing meaningful concern for sexual health is a task that necessitates paying enough attention to social movements and political currents within countries, as well as on regional and global levels. The authors note that these factors influence the standards of health, legal, and policy standards as well as the impacts of these standards of individual people's lives and experiences with sexual health, their sexuality, and their sexual rights. The focus of this literature is on the support that the triangle of sexual health ought to get from all relevant sources to avoid adverse consequences on any of the three. The stand is that sexual health is generally taken to be the legitimizing way through which sexual pleasure and sexual rights are addressed.

Sexual health is therefore an entry point that allows for engagement not only with stakeholders in the health sector but also those in policy making and programming who may otherwise not be in positions to immediately sympathize with the importance of pleasure of rights. Sexual health is inherently linked with the rights of people, this literature highlights the rights of women, to freely choose when and with whom to engaged in sexual activity, and the need for these rights to be respected and protected by all the stakeholders who are tasked with the protection of human rights in general (Tang et al.,2020). In this essence, the legal frameworks and policies are essential since they set the rules for people's conduct within the society as well as being used for programmatic interventions. The take herein is that laws can contribute to the development of programmatic interventions and service delivery on sexual health, including supporting people's experiences with sexual

pleasure and search for information that they require to protect their sexual rights and health. However, these same laws have the potential to have entirely negative outcomes as they may create limitations to sexual health and pleasure, including barring some groups of people access to sexual health services by making it conditional (Tang et al.,2020).

On their part, Miller et al., (2015) focus on sexual rights being taken as any other human rights. This literature sees to provide resources and in developing rights claims around sexual health and sexuality in general. Having an understanding of the linkage between sexual health, sexual rights, and human rights is crucial in this essence as it informs programming and policy development in sexual rights and health. The understanding also informs the relevant stakeholders on how the development of laws, programs, and policies is the obligation of the state. For these to be practically possible, the scope of human rights that are relevant to sexual health and sexual needs to be understood. This scope has expanded significantly since the turn of the century and the authors in their literature encompass some of the critically important documentation that policy and program design and reforms widely apply (Miller et al.,2015) The authors also focus on the diversity that exists in the definition of sexuality, sexual health, and sexual rights, with a particular interest in the way the WHO (World Health Organization) define and applies these terms.

The definitions of sexuality and sexual health are of critical importance in any research involving these terms. Edwards and Coleman (2004) trace the definitions from the original eight that were given by the WHO in 1975 to the latest one at the time of writing their paper in 2004, In order to get an in-depth understanding of the different definition the authors focus on a critical review of contextual factors for each definition as well as the specific contributions of each definition to developing the understanding of sexual health. As they put it, defining sexuality and sexual health has its spine in the original WHO definitions of 1975, but over decades, aspects of physical and mental health have been incorporated together with responsibilities and people's sexual rights (World Health Organization,2010) In this work, a detailed illustration of why it is important to defined sexual health in the context of promoting sexual health provided. There is also the statement of the expected continuous evolution of the concept and definition of sexuality, sexual rights, and sexual health

in general as more historical events impact the way the society generally perceives this topic.

Discussion

While discussing sexual health and all the factors or concepts surrounding it, it is critical to incorporate the aspect of sexual and reproductive health (SRH). This concept is a right of every human and is essential to the development of every person, especially with regards to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The issues of sexual and reproductive health span wide beyond the primary concept of sexuality and the right to pleasure derivation from it by people, to include issues like death and disability which are associated with reproductive health. Some of the major issues in this concept include pregnancy, childbirth and abortion, HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, as well as reproductive cancers (Giambi,2002). The concept of SRH accounts for a fifth of the world's burden of ill health for women who have attained reproductive age and almost a sixth of men. It is, thus a topic that can in no way be overlooked as it has significant socioeconomic impacts on the population as a whole.

The essentiality of sexual and reproductive rights is a justifiable for a number of reasons. First of all, women require access to safe, affordable, and effective contraception methods in order to be in the position to make informed decisions about their sexual health. The role of effective family planning education, and sexual health education in general to the improvement of maternal and infant health is critical as it helps women in preventing unwanted and closely spaced pregnancies which would lower the quality of life for both the mother and the infant (Giambi ,2002). Girls in the adolescent age are especially faced with risk of pregnancy complications, and they are at the age where HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections posed a great threat to their sexual and general health. This is particularly a challenge in the developing countries where early age at childbirth of first child, high fertility rates are all associated with an increased risk of HIV infection and reproductive cancers, particularly cervical cancer. All these factors highlight the importance of sexual health as a realm that entails sexual health education, sexuality, sexual rights, and the legal or socio-political factors associated with people's sexuality. (Giambi,2002)

Recommendations

The primary recommendation from this study is that more efforts have to be put towards enlightening people about their sexual health. This study highlights the need for access to proper sexual health services and education by vulnerable groups, mostly made up of girls and women of reproductive ages. Providing these groups with adequate and effective education about their sexuality will be vital for them to understand and protect their sexual rights, and most importantly, to practice responsible sexual activities. Such developments would help eliminate the consequences irresponsible sexual practices and also disease and ill health associated with consequences. Another recommendation is that while such education and services are provided, the provision should be carried out in a gender-neutral way because although research indicate that more women are affected by consequences of poor sexual health, the impacts are not restricted to women as more than 14% of men also suffer the same results.

4. Results

From all the literature that is available on the topic of sexual health, the first thing that can be concluded is that the definition of sexual health is not constant but one but rather it is a set of ever evolving definitions. The definitions of sexual health, sexuality and sexual rights evolved according to the influence that social experiences and historical events have on how the society generally perceives sexuality and what it means to be sexually healthy. Critically, it is notable that of all the definitions entailed in this paper, none of them has refuted the original WHO definitions of sexual health, which is a set of height definitions given for the first time in 1975. The pattern is notable regarding this evolution of the definition is that while the specific sources point to the original definitions of 1975, they incorporate new areas of human health and social living into their definitions. This gives the concept of sexual health an ever-expanding realm of the parts of human lives it covers. There is a general expectation that as the future continues bringing new experiences and more societies continue opening up to the concept of sexual health and sexual rights, more areas of human health and rights will be incorporated into the general concept of sexual health, meaning that the definition will continue evolving (World Health Organization ,2017)

The diversity in definition of sexual health is vital conceptual and practical reasons. Essentially, there are dangers involved if the definition was to be made a standard and rigid one. The reason for this is because social diversity leads to diverse perceptions towards sexuality and sexual health, meaning that by nature, the approach towards the concept of sexuality in general would lead to some groups of people being set aside and being considered as out-casts or being sexually unhealthy. Such an outcome would have negative consequences in the progress towards better sexual health and improved access to safer and effective sexual health services for all people. It would also have a negative influence on the policy and program development which are related to the protection of people's liberties and rights associating with their derivation of pleasure from their sexuality. The literature used in in this study has also highlighted the challenges facing women with the linkage of sexual health and reproductive health, noting that a majority of women of reproductive age face challenges that required adequate sexual health education and access to proper sexual health services to be controlled. Also, the negative impacts of lack of access to proper sexual health affects both men and women, hence the need to approach it from a gender-neutral perspective but through programs that solve particular issues for each gender.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, sexual health is a wide topic which does not have a standardized definition in terms of boundaries and aspects that are entailed within the definition. Official definitions of sexual health have been around since 1975 when the WHO (World Health organization) provided a framework consisting of up to eight definitions relating to this topic. The evolution of this definitions continued to date, and expectations are that more openness to the topic get embraced in areas where conservativeness remains an issue will bring in more aspects of human health and daily living into the definitions of sexual health. The correlation between sexual health and human rights is significant and positive, which means that aspects of sexual health reach to legal and policy making realms where the state has to get involved. Therefore, due to this nature of the topic of sexual health, there is a need to avoid creating standardized definitions of the issues within the topic as that would lead to the exclusion of some people who may not fit within the provided standards.

References

- Edwards, W.M. and Coleman, E. (2004) 'Defining sexual health: a descriptive overview', *Archives of Sexual Behaviour*, 33(3), pp,189-195.
- Epstein, S. and Mamo, L. (2017) 'The proliferation of sexual health: Diverse social problems and the legitimization of sexuality', *Social Science & Medicine*, 188, pp.176-190
- Giami, A. (2002) 'Sexual health: The emergence, development, and diversity of a concept', *Annual review of research*,13(1), pp.1-35
- Gruskin, S.Y., Castellanos-Usigli, A., Khizanishvili, G. and Kismodi, E. (2019) 'Sexual health, sexual rights, and sexual pleasure: meaningfully engaging the perfect triangle', *Sexual and reproductive Health Matters*, 27(1), pp.29-40.
- Lottes, I.L. (2013) 'Sexual rights: meanings, controversies, and sexual health promotion', *Journal of Sex Research*, 50(3-4), pp 367-391.
- Miller, A. M., Kismodi, E., Cottingham, J. and Gruskin, S. (2015) 'Sexual rights as human rights: a guide to authoritative sources and principles for applying human rights to sexuality and sexual health', *Reproductive Health Matters*, 23(46), pp.16-30.
- Shirmohammadi, M., Kohan, S., Shamsi –Gooshki, E. and Shahriari, M. (2018) 'Ethical considerations in sexual health research: A narrative review', *Iranian journal of nursing midwifery research*, 23 (3), pp. 157
- Tang, K., Gaoshan, J., Ahonsi, B., Ali, M., Bonet, M., Broutet N., Kara, E., Kim, C., Thorson, A. and Thwin, S.S. (2020) 'Sexual and reproductive health (SRH): a key issue in the emergency response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak', *Reproductive Health*, 179(10), pp. 1-3.
- World Health Organization (2010) *Developing sexual health programmes: a framework for action* (No.WHO/RHR/HRP/10.22) World Health Organization
- World Health Organization (2015) *Sexual health, human, rights, and the law*. World Health Organization.
- World Health Organization (2017) *Consolidated guideline on sexual and reproductive health and rights of women living with HIV*. World health Organization

