



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**EXPERIENCES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN
TEACHING ADOLESCENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY
ABOUT SEXUALITY EDUCATION:
A CASE STUDY IN KOTA SAMARAHAN, SARAWAK**

Anis Raihan binti Dzeidee Schaff

**Bachelor of Science with Honours (Cognitive Science)
2018**

**EXPERIENCES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN TEACHING
ADOLESCENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY ABOUT SEXUALITY
EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY IN KOTA SAMARAHAN, SARAWAK**

ANIS RAIHAN BINTI DZEIDEE SCHAFF

This project is submitted
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a
Bachelor of Science with Honours
(Cognitive Science)

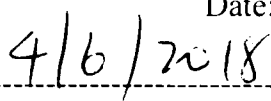
Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK
(2018)


The project entitled ‘Experiences of Special Education Teachers in Teaching Adolescents with Intellectual Disability About Sexuality Education: A Case Study in Kota Samarahan, Sarawak’ was prepared by Anis Raihan binti Dzeidee Schaff and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Science with Honours (Cognitive Science).

Received for examination by:



(FITRI SURAYA MOHAMAD)

Date:


Grade 

UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK

Grade: A

Please tick one

Final Year Project Report ☒

Masters ☐

PhD ☐

DECLARATION OF ORIGINAL WORK

This declaration is made on the 26 day of MAY year 2018.

Student's Declaration:

I, ANIS RAIHAN BINTI DZEIDEE SCHAFF, 51230, FACULTY OF COGNITIVE SCIENCES AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, hereby declare that the work entitled, EXPERIENCES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN TEACHING ADOLESCENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY ABOUT SEXUALITY EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY IN KOTA SAMARAHAN, SARAWAK is my original work. I have not copied from any other students' work or from any other sources with the exception where due reference or acknowledgement is made explicitly in the text, nor has any part of the work been written for me by another person.

04 June 2018

Anis Raihan
Anis Raihan binti Dzeidee Schaff (51230)

Supervisor's Declaration:

I, ASSOC. PROF. DR. FITRI SURAYA MOHAMAD, hereby certify that the work entitled, EXPERIENCES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN TEACHING ADOLESCENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY ABOUT SEXUALITY EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY IN KOTA SAMARAHAN, SARAWAK was prepared by the aforementioned or above mentioned student, and was submitted to the "FACULTY" as a *partial/full fulfillment for the conferment of BACHELOR OF SCIENCE WITH HONOURS (COGNITIVE SCIENCE), and the aforementioned work, to the best of my knowledge, is the said student's work

Received for examination by: Fitri Suraya

(ASSOC. PROF. DR. FITRI SURAYA)

Date: 4/6/2018

I declare this Project/Thesis is classified as (Please tick (√)):

- ☐ **CONFIDENTIAL** (Contains confidential information under the Official Secret Act 1972)*
- ☐ **RESTRICTED** (Contains restricted information as specified by the organisation where research was done)*
- ☒ **OPEN ACCESS**

I declare this Project/Thesis is to be submitted to the Centre for Academic Information Services (CAIS) and uploaded into UNIMAS Institutional Repository (UNIMAS IR) (Please tick (√)):

- ☒ **YES**
- ☐ **NO**

Validation of Project/Thesis

I hereby duly affirmed with free consent and willingness declared that this said Project/Thesis shall be placed officially in the Centre for Academic Information Services with the abide interest and rights as follows:

- This Project/Thesis is the sole legal property of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS).
- The Centre for Academic Information Services has the lawful right to make copies of the Project/Thesis for academic and research purposes only and not for other purposes.
- The Centre for Academic Information Services has the lawful right to digitize the content to be uploaded into Local Content Database.
- The Centre for Academic Information Services has the lawful right to make copies of the Project/Thesis if required for use by other parties for academic purposes or by other Higher Learning Institutes.
- No dispute or any claim shall arise from the student himself / herself neither a third party on this Project/Thesis once it becomes the sole property of UNIMAS.
- This Project/Thesis or any material, data and information related to it shall not be distributed, published or disclosed to any party by the student himself/herself without first obtaining approval from UNIMAS.

Student's signature: *Ani Reihan*
Date: 04 June 2018

Supervisor's signature: *[Signature]*
Date: 4/6/2018

Current Address:
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
94300, Kota Samarahan
Sarawak

Notes: * If the Project/Thesis is **CONFIDENTIAL** or **RESTRICTED**, please attach together as annexure a letter from the organisation with the date of restriction indicated, and the reasons for the confidentiality and restriction.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the name of Allah, the most Gracious and the most Compassionate. Alhamdulillah, with His utmost blessings I managed to complete my Final Year Project.

First of all, I would like to express my best appreciation and gratitude to my supervisor, Associate Professor Dr. Fitri Suraya Mohamad for her endless guidance, constructive feedbacks, and advices throughout my journey of completing this Final Year Project. Also, I would like to thank her for always encouraging me to think critically throughout all the chapters of this thesis.

Next, I would like to express my endless gratitude to my mother, Puan Hanita binti Kassim, for being my backbone throughout everything, for always believing in me, and for always being there. Thank you, Mama. Also, a big thank you to my family for the continuous words of encouragement and support throughout my years here.

I would also like to thank my friends Siti Noraini, Azra Hadirah, Ely Syuhadah, Suzanne Law, and my best friends for the help and support they gave me in finishing my Final Year Project. Not forgetting, the members of the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development, especially the Cognitive Science lecturers and course mates – thank you.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to articulate my deepest acknowledgement to myself for finally completing this project. The sweat, tears, and sleepless nights – they were all worth it. Congratulations.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	viii
Abstrak	xi
Chapter One: Introduction	1 – 9
1.0 Introduction	
1.1 Background of the study	
1.2 Problem statement	
1.3 Research objectives	
1.4 Research questions	
1.5 Definition of terms	
1.6 Limitations of the study	
1.7 Significance of the study	
1.8 Summary	
Chapter Two: Literature Review	10 – 21
2.0 Introduction	
2.1 Sexuality education for adolescents with intellectual disability	
2.2 Cognitive abilities of individuals with intellectual disability	
2.3 Approaches in teaching sexuality education to individuals with intellectual disability	
2.4 Challenges in teaching intellectually disabled adolescents about sexuality education	
2.5 Summary	
Chapter Three: Method	22 – 30
3.0 Introduction	
3.1 Research design	
3.2 Research setting	
3.3 Sampling	
3.4 Data collection techniques	
3.5 Research instrument	
3.6 Data collection procedure	
3.7 Quality assurance	
3.8 Data analysis procedure	
3.9 Assumptions	
3.10 Confidentiality and privacy	
3.11 Summary	
Chapter Four: Findings	31 – 44
4.0 Introduction	
4.1 Informants' teaching backgrounds	
4.2 Thematical analysis	
4.3 Summary	

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion	45 – 54
5.0 Introduction	
5.1 Discussion of the findings	
5.2 Significance of the study	
5.3 Limitations of the study	
5.4 Suggestions for future research	
5.5 Conclusion	
References	55 – 61
Appendices	62 – 78

ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study is conducted to explore the experiences of three Special Education teachers in teaching adolescents with intellectual disability about sexuality education at a secondary school that offers Special Education programme in Kota Samarahan, Sarawak. The study investigates the teaching approaches used to teach cognitive and social-behavioural aspects as well as challenges in teaching adolescents with intellectual disability about sexuality education. Interviews, document review, and participation observation methods were utilized to collect data. Findings of the study were analysed by using a thematic analysis procedure. In the cognitive approaches aspect, analysis of the data reveals that the adolescents' comprehension and memory is greatly aided by the use of concrete materials, modelling strategy, and constant repetition; attention and focus in class can be obtained by the use of multimedia and storytelling approach; and understanding about sexuality is affected by the language used. In the social-behavioural aspect, the findings revealed the importance of teachers and students' comfort when talking about sexuality, mixed gender classes, peer guidance, and the adolescents' intrapersonal intelligence. All these aspects are key in making sure that the adolescents are able to reach an understanding and acceptance towards learning about sexuality education. The study also discovered that limitation of teaching materials, the adolescents' unsupervised usage of the technology, and the sensitivity of sexuality education in the local setting are among the main challenges faced by the Special Education teachers in teaching about sexuality education. The study also uncovered how the adolescents' limited mental capabilities particularly in the social-behavioural domain has resulted in the adolescents displaying tendencies toward sexually risky behaviours which in turn exposes them to sexually risky situations.

Keywords: Intellectual disability, sexuality education

ABSTRAK

Kajian kes bersifat kualitatif ini dijalankan untuk menyelidik pengalaman tiga orang guru Pendidikan Khas dalam mengajar remaja kurang upaya intelektual mengenai pendidikan seksualiti di sebuah sekolah menengah yang menawarkan program Pendidikan Khas di Kota Samarahan, Sarawak. Secara spesifiknya, kajian ini berfokus untuk menyiasat pendekatan mengajar dalam aspek kognitif dan tingkah-laku sosial serta cabaran yang dihadapi guru-guru Pendidikan Khas dalam mengajar remaja kekurangan upaya intelektual mengenai pendidikan seksualiti. Satu set soalan wawancara separuh berstruktur telah digunakan sebagai instrumen kajian; wawancara mendalam, kajian dokumen, dan pemerhatian penyertaan juga digunakan sebagai kaedah pengumpulan. Dapatan kajian ini telah dianalisa menggunakan prosedur analisis tematik. Dalam aspek pendekatan kognitif, analisis data mendedahkan bahawa kefahaman dan ingatan remaja dapat dibantu oleh penggunaan bahan konkrit, strategi pemodelan, dan pengulangan berterusan; perhatian dan tumpuan remaja dalam kelas boleh diperolehi melalui penggunaan pendekatan multimedia dan bercerita; pemahaman tentang seksualiti dipengaruhi oleh bahasa yang digunakan, dalam hal ini bahasa Melayu digunakan sebagai bahasa komunikasi utama di dalam kelas, dan pelajaran harus disampaikan dengan jelas dan langsung sambil menggunakan istilah saintifik yang betul. Sementara itu, dalam aspek tingkah laku sosial, dapatan kajian adalah termasuk kepentingan keselesaan guru dan pelajar apabila membicarakan tentang hal berkaitan seksualiti, kelas bercampur jantina, bimbingan rakan sebaya, dan kecerdasan intrapersonal remaja. Semua ini penting untuk memastikan remaja dapat mencapai pemahaman dan penerimaan terhadap pembelajaran tentang pendidikan seksualiti. Kajian ini mendapati bahawa bahan pengajaran yang terhad, penggunaan teknologi oleh remaja tanpa pengawasan, dan sensitiviti pendidikan seksualiti adalah antara cabaran yang dihadapi oleh guru Pendidikan Khas dalam mengajar kandungan pendidikan seksualiti. Dapatan kajian juga menunjukkan bagaimana keupayaan mental terhad remaja terutamanya dalam domain tingkah laku sosial menyebabkan golongan remaja ini cenderung dalam memaparkan tingkah laku berisiko seksual, yang akibatnya mendedahkan mereka kepada situasi berisiko seksual.

Kata kunci: Kurang upaya intelektual, pendidikan seksualiti

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The aim of this study is to investigate and analyse Special Education teachers' experiences in teaching adolescents with intellectual disabilities about sexuality education. Specifically, this study aims to explore the challenges that has been faced by Special Education teachers throughout the years they have taught sexuality education to adolescents with intellectual disability. Besides the challenges, this study intends to investigate the approaches used by Special Education teachers in teaching adolescents with intellectual disability about sexuality education. The kind of approaches that is emphasized in this study is leaning towards the cognition and social behaviour aspects. This is an introductory chapter that includes the background of the study, the problem statement, the objectives and the research questions of the study. Additionally, this chapter provides the significance of the study and the definition of terms used throughout this study.

1.1 Background of the study

Adolescence is a transition phase for children from their childhood into adulthood (Hashmi, 2013). Hashmi (2013) describes that adolescence occur roughly at the age of 10 to 20 years old and can be categorized into three phases: early adolescent (12 to 14 years old), middle adolescents (14 to 17 years old), late adolescents (17 to 19 years old). In this study, the adolescence phase that will be focused on is between the age 13 to 19 years old. In Malaysia, the age of adolescence (13 – 19 years old) is synonym to teenagers who are at their secondary education level also known as secondary school. At this age, adolescents go through a phase of changes in physical, emotional, and cognitive forms where these changes lead to curiosity in them which may cause a turmoil of emotions when questions are unanswered which may progress into frustration, uncontrolled anger, and mental insecurity (Bhatia, 2012).

Adolescents' curiosity in exploring their body, identity, and personality is a normal thing but when the curiosity is explored without cautious and knowledge – things can get dangerous. These changes are inclusive to teenagers with intellectual disabilities such as mental retardation, development retardation, Down syndrome, autism, speech and language disorder, emotional and behavioural disorder, hyperactive, and hypoactive (Ang & Lee, 2013). Despite experiencing cognitive and behavioural impairment, adolescents with intellectual disabilities still go through puberty and experience physical changes within the normal parameters as other adolescents (Rashikj & Trajkovski, 2009). Unquestionably, the need for them to have

knowledge on their sexuality is vital for themselves and the society because these students will be needing answers to questions regarding what is sexuality, the functions of human sexuality to themselves and others, and the responsibilities of the knowledge about sexuality that they have gained (Mohd. Yunus, 2008).

In Malaysia, sexuality education is introduced as the Reproductive Health and Social Education (PEERS) by the Ministry of Education in 2006 where the contents include topics such as sexual reproductive health, skills, knowledge, and behaviours (Singh, 2012). Additionally, Mohamad Mokhtar, Rosenthal, Hocking, and Abdul Satar (2013) stated that PEERS is not a typical sex education program, but rather a syllabus that touches on several subjects related to sexual and reproductive health issues which are integrated into subjects such as Science, Biology, Religious and Moral Studies, and Physical Education. Mohd. Yunus (2008) described that sexuality education is vital to adolescents with intellectual disabilities since they do not have the opportunity to ask their peers neither do they have the chance to observe, develop good values, and practice a healthy social and sexual behaviour. Their ability in reading is limited thus increasing the difficulty in acquiring information about human sexuality in the form of reading materials (Mohd. Yunus, 2008).

Besides family members, intellectually disabled adolescents are dependent on the teachers in acquiring information about human sexuality. According to Rosenthal and Smith; Harrison and Dempsey (as cited in Milton, 2003), teachers are widely recognized as the most credible and trustworthy source of enlightenment about sexual health hence making them on the top list of young people's preferred source of information. Due to this, teachers play an important role in recognizing their students' understanding and knowledge acquirement in a specific information about human sexuality. Haignere, Culhane, Balsley, and Legos (1996) believed that the success of sexuality education program is mostly dependent of the skills and commitment of the teachers and educators. Consequently, it is crucial to consider teachers' perspectives and attitude in the development and implementation of sexuality education programme (Milton, Primary school sex education programs: Views and experiences of teachers in four primary schools in Sydney, Australia, 2003). Although this is the case, no research in exploring the practices and challenges experienced by Special Education teachers in teaching adolescents with intellectual disability about sexuality education has been done in Malaysia. Hence, students with intellectual disabilities should be included in the implementation of sexual education at secondary Special Education schools (Ang & Lee, 2013).

1.2 Problem statement

In the year 2016, the Ministry of Health has recorded a total number of 16,528 teenage pregnancy cases based on the number of registered pregnant adolescents at government clinics with $\frac{3}{4}$ cases involving married teens (Kumar, 2017). Recently, The Women, Family, and Community Development Ministry disclosed that a total number of 104 baby dumping cases in 2016, of whom 61 of the babies were found dead (Miwil & Teoh, 2017). Miwil and Teoh (2017) further wrote, Assistant Commissioner Ong Chin Lan stated that in one of the statement recorded by the pregnant adolescent - the teen was unaware that having a sexual intercourse would results to pregnancy. Ong described that it is pivotal for schools to provide further comprehensive sexuality education curriculum and moral-based teachings to decrease the cases of baby dumping as well other social ills among adolescents in Malaysia (Miwil & Teoh, 2017).

What is alarming being that the cases of teenage pregnancies are not exclusive to only adolescents who are considered mentally 'normal', but this applies to also adolescents who have intellectual disabilities. Adolescents with intellectual disabilities are at high risks of becoming the victims of sexual crimes which often leads to rape, abuse and unwanted pregnancy. For instance, in 2016 a disabled girl from Penang was allegedly raped by a Bangladeshi man and later it was found that the man has convicted the crime several times for RM10 each time (Nambiar, 2016). This kind of incident occurs due to their naivety about the surrounding, together with the lack of knowledge of what is right and wrong (UNICEF, 2017). With this, sexuality education is equally, if not, more crucial to adolescents with intellectual disabilities because they have lesser information in the human sexuality area due to several reasons such as the lack of exposure to sexuality talks with peers and elders and limited reading from various sources due to their disability (Mohd. Yunus, 2008).

1.3 Research objectives

1.3.1 General objective

To explore the experiences of Special Education teachers in teaching adolescents with intellectual disabilities about sexuality education in Kota Samarahan, Sarawak.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

- To analyse the approaches done by Special Education teachers when teaching adolescents with intellectual disability about sexuality education

- To investigate the challenges faced by Special Education teachers when teaching adolescents with intellectual disability the content of sexuality education

1.4 Research questions

1. How does Special Education teachers deliver the information and content of sexuality education in the aspects of cognition and social behavioural interactions to adolescents with intellectual disability?
2. What are the challenges that Special Education teachers face throughout their experience of teaching sexuality education?

In the context of this study, the approaches done by the Special Education teachers in delivering the information and content of sexuality education is aimed to be investigated in the aspects of cognition and social behaviour. Particularly in the cognition aspect, this study is interested in exploring the approaches done by Special Education teachers in retaining students' memory, attention in class, generalization in learning as well as the language used in class. Meanwhile in the social behavioural aspect, this study aims to explore the approaches done in ways that are related to adolescents' social relationships such as teacher-student interpersonal relationship, relationships with peers, and intrapersonal relationship; which may contribute to a successful delivery of sexuality education content to adolescents with intellectual disability.

1.5 Definition of terms

1.5.1 Sexuality education

Conceptual definition

Sexuality education, as defined by Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS), is a lifelong learning process in which learners gain knowledge and skills, as well as shape their attitudes, beliefs, and values about human sexuality. Besides, sexuality education encloses of topics such as sexual development, sexual and reproductive health, interpersonal relationships, affection, intimacy, body image, and gender roles (SIECUS, 2017).

Operational definition

In this study, sexuality education is a form of knowledge taught about human sexuality that include topics regarding sexual and reproductive health issues, provided for students in Malaysia. Sexuality education in Malaysian schools does not stand on its own, instead it is implicitly taught in subjects that deliver factual sciences, values, responsibilities, and beliefs about sexual and reproductive health issues such as Biology, Science, Physical and Health Education, Islamic Studies, and Moral Studies. Accordingly, the term sexuality education is not explicitly used to indicate sexuality education instead a program called Reproductive Health and Social Education (PEERS) is introduced as a program that instils the content of sexuality education. In addition, Mohamad Mokhtar, Rosenthal, Hocking, and Abdul Satar (2013) stated that PEERS is not a typical sex education program, but rather a syllabus that touches on several subjects related to sexual and reproductive health issues which are integrated into subjects such as Science, Biology, Religious and Moral Studies, and Physical and Health Education.

In the Special Education department of government secondary schools in Malaysia, the Ministry of Education has built a curriculum exclusive for students who are in the Special Education for Learning Disabilities Program (*Pendidikan Khas Bermasalah Pembelajaran*) called the *Kurikulum Pendidikan Khas Bermasalah Pembelajaran (PKBP)* (Joan Peter, Elias, & Nasri, 2011). There are three out of four main fields of study that instil sexuality education into the syllabus which are the Self-Management Field (*Bidang Pengurusan Diri*), Spiritual and Moral Values Field (*Bidang Kerohanian dan Nilai-Nilai Murni*), and Social, Recreational, and Creativity Field (*Bidang Sosial, Riadah dan Kreativiti*). For each of the field, there are several components of the field that are categorised under each field. First, the Self-Management Field has components such as Self-Management (*Pengurusan Diri*), Manipulative Skills (*Kemahiran Manipulatif*), Behaviour Management (*Pengurusan Tingkah Laku*), and Life Skills (*Kemahiran Hidup*). In the Spiritual and Moral Values Field, the components of syllabus include subjects such as Islamic Studies (*Pendidikan Agama Islam*) and Moral Studies (*Pendidikan Moral*). For the Social, Recreational, and Creativity Field, components in the form of subjects include Physical Education (*Pendidikan Jasmani*), Arts (*Pendidikan Seni*), Music, Coordination, and Drama (*Pendidikan Muzik, Gerakan dan Drama*), and Social, Science and Environment (*Sains, Sosial dan Alam Sekitar*).

Specifically, in the Self-Management Field, the subjects that are crucial in integrating concepts of sexuality education include subject such as Self-Management, Behaviour Management, and Life Skills. This is because, these subjects are important in teaching the adolescents with intellectual disability about themselves as a human being, how to manage themselves, and how to behave around others. For the Spiritual and Moral Values Field, both components which are the Islamic Studies and Moral Studies are included in this study as the subjects that has content of sexuality education in it. The two subjects vary in terms of the students of each subject where Islamic Studies is for students who are Muslims while Moral Studies is for students who are non-Muslims. Lastly, in the field of Social, Recreational, and Creativity, the component that is related to sexuality education include the Social, Science and Environment subject.

1.5.2 Reproductive Health and Social Education (PEERS)

Conceptual definition

Reproductive Health and Social Education (PEERS) is a program established by the Ministry of Education, Malaysia with the contents consisting of sexual reproductive health, skills, knowledge, and behaviours (Singh, 2012). According to Sabah Education director Datuk Maimunah Suhaibul, the content of PEERS is leaned more towards the teaching of male and female reproductive systems, childbirth, and methods on handling unwanted sexual attention (Miwil & Teoh, 2017). Furthermore, (Mohd. Yunus, 2008) described PEERS as a life-long learning process which considers cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects. Khadijah Rohani added, PEERS syllabus includes the learning of assertive skills and the ability to make wise and responsible decision in sexuality issues.

Operational definition

In this study, the term PEERS will not be used to indicate the sexuality education program taught in Malaysia. Instead, the term “sexuality education” will be used throughout this study to indicate the sexuality education which includes the content of PEERS program and the general context of sexuality education.

1.5.3 Special Education

Conceptual definition

Special Education is “a system of supports and services that are provided to students with disabilities...” (McLaughlin, 1995, p. 203). Another concise definition of Special Education as defined by TEACH is, it is a program designed for students who experience delays in the aspects of mental, physical, social, and/or emotional hence disabling them to receive and understand lessons taught in a traditional classroom (TEACH, 2017).

Operational definition

This study focuses on Special Education programs in government schools in Malaysia where this type of education is known as Special Education for Learning Disabilities Program (*Program Pendidikan Khas Integrasi Bermasalah Pembelajaran*). The Special Education (LD) program or *PPKI Masalah Pembelajaran* serves as a formal education platform for students with a type of learning disability that include those with intellectual disabilities. The students are also separated in terms of age where students aged 7 to 12 years old are placed in primary schools whereas students aged 13 to 19 years old attend secondary schools that offer Special Education programs.

1.5.4 Intellectual disability

Conceptual definition

According to *American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, *intellectual disability is type of disorder that limits an individual's intellectual functioning (including reasoning, learning, problem solving) and adaptive behaviour which includes daily social and practical skills* (AAIDD, 2017).

Operational definition

In this study, intellectual disabilities are of the same definition as defined by the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AADIDD). Often in Malaysia, children and adolescents with learning disabilities receive their formal education at government schools with Special Education program offered, due to their inability to attend mainstream classes. The Special Education program that students with intellectual disability enrol in is known as Special Education for Learning Disabilities Program (*Program Pendidikan Khas Integrasi Bermasalah Pembelajaran*). Students who are entitled to this program include those who have disorders such as

Down Syndrome, mild autism, Attention Deficit-Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), mild mental retardation, and specific learning disabilities such as Dyslexia (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2017). In this study, the term “learners” will sometimes be used to indicate the adolescents with intellectual disability.

1.6 Limitations of the study

According to Roberts (2010), in a research, “Limitations are usually areas over which you have no control. Some typical limitations are sample size, methodology constraints, length of the study, and response rate” (p. 162). This study too has several limitations that comes from the methodological constraints and researcher’s own constraints which include:

i. Researcher bias

Searles (1999) stated that in a case study, the researcher’s personal subjective feelings may influence the study in the aspects of data collection and data interpretation. In this study, the researcher and informants may have contradictory beliefs in specified topic due to the differences in cultural background, knowledge and experiences. The differences are; the researcher is not from around the research setting state and has less experiences in terms of experiences as compared to the informants. To avoid further bias in the process of data interpretation and analysis as well as conclusion, an expert will be asked to review the findings and conclusion of the study. Besides, the method of asking informants to review the results will be used to ensure a common ground in the interpretation of beliefs between the researcher and informants.

ii. Research setting

The research setting selected is a secondary school that offers Special Education program located in Koa Samarahan, Sarawak. Therefore, the findings of this study may not be applicable to other study of the similar context in a different setting due to the appearance of cultural bias in the informants’ responses. Nonetheless, the selected research setting is a school that comprises of Special Education teachers who have had experiences in teaching adolescents with intellectual disability about the content of sexuality education. Besides, the population of students with intellectual disability represent the age range of what is considered adolescents as well as the different levels of intellectual disability as stated in the research setting section of this report.

1.7 Significance of the study

This study will contribute to the existing and future literatures on the experiences of Special Education teachers in teaching adolescents with intellectual disabilities about sexuality education. Besides, the findings on teachers' teaching approaches when educating sexuality education can be used and improvised by other Special Education teachers in teaching their students. Additionally, knowing teachers' experiences may benefit the students in gaining knowledge and teachers in teaching sexuality education - by an improvement and arrangement by the Ministry of Education towards a much comprehensive sexuality education curriculum for students who are in the Special Education program.

1.8 Summary

To summarize, a study done to investigate the experiences of Special Education teachers in teaching adolescents with intellectual disability about sexuality education is important to initiate the awareness on the importance of sexuality education to adolescents with intellectual disability due to the adolescents' disability in several cognition aspects. Consequently, this study's objectives which are to investigate the approaches done on the cognitive and social-behavioural aspects by the Special Education teachers as well as the challenges experienced is hoped to serve as a guide in the designing of a much comprehensive sexuality education curriculum for the Special Education program and training programs for the teachers. In the next chapter, a thorough review of past literature will be discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

One of the most alarming issues that drives this study is the stigma among the society towards individuals with intellectual disability as human beings that are perpetual and have no sexual interests who wishes to stay chaste forever. Walker-Hirsch stated that it is either people think intellectually disabled individuals are asexual or uncontrollably sexual who has no control over their sexuality and desires (Heisey, 2015). It leads to another equally worrying issue which is the sexual crimes happening among individuals who are intellectually disabled, specifically among the adolescents. Sexual crimes are at high-risks among intellectually disabled adolescents due to several reasons such as the lack of knowledge about human sexuality and safe sex, the struggle to think abstractly and understand medical terminology, as well as having the difficulty in relating acquired information about health to themselves and their experiences (Deschaine, 2011).

2.1 Sexuality education for adolescents with intellectual disability

The Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education emphasized on the use of Information, Motivation, and Behavioral Skills (IMB) Model as a guide to sexual health education (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2003). The elements of the model include elements such as information that is relevant to sexual health and easy to be applied in one's life, the motivation to apply the knowledge of sexual health in one's life, and the behavioral skills to carry out healthy behaviors. Although the guidelines are not specifically designed for the intellectually disabled adolescents, the model provides the areas that need coverage in delivering the content of sexuality education (Ramage, 2015). On the contrary, in Malaysia, the sexuality education taught under the PEERS program mostly include topics such as human anatomy and general biological functions but has very limited content coverage on areas regarding human sexuality such as human relationship, negotiation skills, and intimate biological issues such as masturbations (Mokhtar, Rosenthal, Hocking, & Satar, 2013). In general, Malaysian's curriculum does not have a specific curriculum for students in the Special Education stream hence the content of PEERS if used for everyone despite their backgrounds but with minor amendments according to the needs of the group of students.

Gougeon (2009) in Henry Giroux (1999) and Peter McLaren's (2007) works believes that a critical pedagogy approach is vital in approaching sexuality education among intellectually disabled individuals. As defined by Giroux (1999) and McLaren (2007):

Critical pedagogy is a way of teaching that is diverse; seeks interdisciplinary knowledge; rejects the distinction between high and low culture, therefore allowing the curriculum to be responsive to peoples' actual lived experiences; shows the ethics behind language used by educators and how they influence behaviour; and questions power relations in school/history and uses this questioning to redefine and re-situate identities (as cited in Gougeon, 2009, p. 285).

This implies that students with intellectual disabilities should be given the rights to a learning environment that is non-biased in the aspects of cultural background, gender, and ability (Gougeon, 2009).

In a more general aspect of education, Smith, Polloway, Patton and Dowdy (2006) suggested that the inclusion of life skills content in the curriculum of the students with intellectual disability to promote a positive quality lifestyle for them. Life skills include but is not limited to the "use of community resources, home and family activities, social and interpersonal skills, health and safety skills, use of leisure time, and participation in the community as a citizen" (Smith, Polloway, Patton, & Dowdy, 2006, p. 249). The content of life skills curriculum mentioned by the authors is broad enough that it covers topics such as human relationship, negotiation skills, and intimate biological issues such as masturbations that has limited coverage in the current PEERS program in Malaysia as reported by Mokhtar, Rosenthal, Hocking, and Satar (2013). Although this is the case, there is still a gap in literature regarding the beliefs and opinions based on experiences about sexuality education for adolescents with intellectual disability, or any disability, by Special Education teachers in Malaysia.

2.2 Cognitive abilities of individuals with intellectual disability

Individuals with intellectual disability face cognitive delays in various domains such as language development, socio-behavioural considerations, attention, memory, and generalization learning (Smith, Polloway, Patton, & Dowdy, 2006). Additionally, Johnson (2017) stated that students with mild intellectual disabilities struggle with language acquisition and academic skills due to low capabilities in attention, memory, and generalization. Accordingly, individuals with intellectual disability struggle to engage in abstract thinking and have symbolic thoughts which interferes with the normal cognitive developmental stages (Smith, Polloway, Patton, & Dowdy, 2006). Typically, at the age of 11 and above, Piaget (2001) suggested that adolescents are supposed to be able to show intelligence by using symbols and abstract thinking through the use of logical thinking parallel to Piaget's formal

operational stage of cognitive development. However, adolescents with intellectual disability experience cognitive delay which affects their understanding in abstract concepts hence the struggle in thinking abstractly about matters related to truth, morality, justice, and existential topics consequently providing alternative views on mentioned matters (Siegler, 1991). Cognitive impairment among adolescents with intellectual disability are interrelated to other cognitive abilities such as language skills, social skills, attention and memory skills, and generalization.

Additionally, language development in adolescents with intellectual disability differs from adolescents with normal intellectual capabilities. Language is a crucial means of communication which occurs in a social context where an effective communication demands the comprehension and acknowledgement of the connections between a language and the speaker (Amberg & Vause, 2012). Correspondingly, Smith, Polloway, Patton and Dowdy (2006) stated that individuals with intellectual disability struggle to acquire the vocabulary and rules of a certain language, interacting with various cultures and understanding different dialects, and sometimes have speech disorders thus making it difficult for them to communicate normally with others and the environment.

Furthermore, individuals with intellectual disability are known to have struggles in the social-behavioural domain where they face the difficulties in social adjustment, social perception and awareness, self-esteem, peer acceptance, and classroom behavioural difficulties (Smith, Polloway, Patton, & Dowdy, 2006). The lack of social-behavioural skills may be one of the factors that make them socially and sexually vulnerable. Thus, sexuality education is important for individuals/adolescents with intellectual disability especially the instillation of knowledge in the social-behavioural aspect.

The several types of attention impairment among individuals with intellectual disability include the difficulty in orienting a task, selective attention, and sustaining attention to a task (Wenar & Kerig, 2006). Task orientation is the ability of an individual to look at the direction of the task; selective attention is a skill that demands one to focus on one aspect of the task while ignoring other unimportant components of the task; sustained attention is a skill that requires one to observe specific task for a certain period (Rosenberg, Westling, & McLeskey, 2013).

Besides attention impairment, Rosenberg, Westling and McLeskey (2013) describe that those with mild intellectual disabilities struggle to remember information that is stored in the short-term memory which to some extent, their memory retainment is influenced by their attention span. Thus, this requires them to use rehearsal strategy which is to repeat something

over and over in order to remember the information acquired that may result to a lot of time consumed (Rosenberg, Westling, & McLeskey, 2013). Lastly, generalization of information is another difficulty faced by individuals with intellectual disability.

Generalization is the ability to apply a concept that has been learned into a different context or situation that is new to an individual, and this requires one to ignore the on-the-surface differences of two structurally similar situations to be able to identify the deeper relation of each situation with the root concept (Ley, 2016).

2.3 Approaches in teaching sexuality education to individuals with intellectual disability

Teaching sexuality education involves special approaches because people who are intellectually disabled develop differently from normal individuals. They tend to experience a delay in some aspects of their cognitive abilities. Due to this, the approaches used in teaching adolescents with intellectual disability sexuality education may differ from how it is taught to adolescents with normal intellectual capabilities. Despite their disability, one must not view them as an asexual being because it is typical for the society to have prejudicial thoughts like this towards intellectually disabled individuals - as quoted by Walker-Hirsch, a sex educator at the University of New Mexico, *"People in general do not look at people with disabilities as any kind of sexual beings. They look at the disability first"* (Heisey, 2015). Swango-Wilson (2011) suggests some practical approaches in teaching sexuality education to individuals with intellectual disability which include homework from the content delivered, delivering of information about safe sex practices as additional information only, and include a safe procedure for the individuals to lodge a report about any kind of abuses received from caregivers. However, these recommendations may need some alterations when used in schools in Malaysia because a study by Yaacob et al. (2010) suggested that despite learning about sexual health in schools, Malaysian adolescents' knowledge regarding sexual health is considered low thus associating them with having low cognitive maturity when comprehending information regarding human sexuality.

This study focuses on the approaches done by the teachers in the cognition and social behavioural aspects. These two aspects are the prominent aspects in shaping an adolescent into becoming an individual who is aware of situations that require them to use skills and knowledge on human sexuality which can be acquired from subjects related to sexuality education. Therefore, in the next section of this paper, reviews on past findings related to approaches done in teaching sexuality education will be discussed. However, the reviews of the literature will not be restricted to the teaching approaches for adolescents with intellectual disability only,

due to limited studies done in the past regarding the teaching approaches of Special Education teachers in teaching sexuality education to adolescents with intellectual disability.

2.3.1 Cognition aspect

Neisser (1967) stated that cognition is referred to as “the mental process which external or internal input is transformed, reduced, elaborated, stored, recovered, and used” (as cited in Brandimonte, Bruno, & Collina, 2006). This process involves brain functions such as perception, attention, memory coding, retention, and recall, decision making, reasoning, problem-solving, imaging, planning and executing actions (Brandimonte, Bruno, & Collina, 2006). In the cognition aspect, there are several cognitive skills that an individual must possess in order to be able to defend themselves in vulnerable situations that involve them to protect themselves. Prior to that, an individual whether with or without intellectual disabilities must have knowledge in skills and information about protecting themselves. In the context of this study, sexuality education provides individuals with intellectual disability with skills to defend themselves at high-risk situations. Thus, this section provides insights on previous related studies done on the approaches done by teachers both in general and sexuality education context within several domains in the cognition aspects.

Approaches in the comprehension, memory, and attention domains

According to Kakayand (2006), learners with intellectual disability have difficulties with metacognition and memory, specifically short-term memory which causes delays in the learners’ ability to arrange, evaluate, and organize information (as cited in Javan, Framarzi, Abedi and Nattaj (2014)). Additionally, learners with intellectual disability have problems with attentiveness, concentration, and behaviours thus affecting their ability to perceive, retrieve, learn, and form concepts and information (Javan, Framarzi, Abedi, & Nattaj, 2014). In learning about sexuality education, or any subjects for that matter, learners are required to be able to utilize their memory and attention skills in order to be able to learn, retrieve, and apply the information that they have acquired into real-life situations.

The Social Cognitive Theory by Bandura (1986) stated that learning occurs by observing from another person where Bandura explained while observing, the learner forms an idea in his mind which this idea will later acts as knowledge that guides the learner in carrying out relevant actions.