



Learning about healthy relationships

Effects of school-based sexuality education

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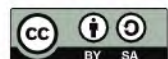


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SHORT SUMMARY

Healthy relationships for learning and thriving

Learning about healthy relationships is critical for learners. The presence and quality of the relationships in their lives shape their experiences both within and beyond the school environment, their well-being and their learning abilities. Despite growing awareness of the importance of equipping young people to develop healthy relationships and protect themselves from unsafe situations, evidence of the full potential of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) beyond health-related outcomes remains limited. This report bridges a gap in evidence on the full potential of CSE: its impact on adolescents' preparedness to build healthy relationships.

Conducted in Buenos Aires Province (Argentina), Armenia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Namibia, and Lagos State (Nigeria), it explores how national sexuality education programmes affect learners' knowledge and preparedness for healthy interpersonal relationships with parents, peers and romantic partners. Mixed-methods were used, employing surveys and focus group discussions with learners and interviews with educators in schools selected for their effective sexuality education programming.

Findings show that 'sexuality education has the potential to increase learners' knowledge of healthy relationships and develop social and emotional skills. Learners' communication with their parents improves; their levels of empathy for peers increase; and they feel more capable of identifying unhealthy dynamics in romantic relationships.

Education ministries are invited to use the findings to further refine their national sexuality education programmes to meet learners' needs more meaningfully.



61% to 91% of
learners in 5 countries
say communication with
parents **improved** as a
result of CSE



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"Since wars begin in the minds of men and women, it is in the minds of men and women that the defences of peace must be constructed"

Learning about healthy relationships

Effects of school-based sexuality education

Foreword

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Education has the power not only to inform, but to transform. For young people, schooling should provide more than academic preparation – it must lay the foundation for the skills, values and confidence needed to create just and healthy societies. This includes learning to form relationships based on respect, consent, empathy and equality.

This new UNESCO report, *Learning about healthy relationships: Effects of school-based sexuality education*, provides timely and compelling evidence on how national sexuality education programmes contribute to learners' ability to develop and strengthen healthy relationships through social and emotional learning skills. Drawing on data from five countries – Argentina (Buenos Aires Province), Armenia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Namibia and Nigeria (Lagos State) – the report explores how sexuality education shapes learners' relationships with parents and caregivers, with peers and friends, and with current or future romantic partners.

Across contexts, learners who received comprehensive, rights-based sexuality education describe more positive relationships, greater self-confidence, and a stronger sense of inclusion. Young people report applying what they learned to resolve conflicts, communicate more openly with adults, and navigate peer and partner dynamics with greater clarity. Many educators also share how sexuality education offered a structured, supportive space to address sensitive topics, sometimes for the first time.

Importantly, the report also points to areas requiring further attention. Time constraints, limited teacher training, rigid school hierarchies and negative disciplining approaches still limit the potential of sexuality education to ensure transformative outcomes. Learners and educators consistently identified the classroom as a space where trust, dialogue and respect could flourish if sexuality education was truly comprehensive, provided through learner-centered pedagogy, and anchored in gender equality and human rights.

This analysis makes an essential contribution to our understanding of what works, and what remains to be done, to harness the full potential of sexuality education in building healthy, inclusive societies. It is my hope that this report inspires Member States and partners to invest further in evidence-based, contextually relevant health education programmes as a core pillar of inclusive, quality education.

Qun Chen,
Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO

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Acronyms

CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
ESI	Educación Sexual Integral (Comprehensive Sexuality Education)
FGD	Focus group discussion
FLHE	Family Life and HIV/AIDS Education
HLP	Healthy Lifestyles Programme
INGO	International non-governmental organization
ITGSE	International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education
KII	Key informant interview
LSHE	Life Skills Health Education
MoE	Ministry of Education (generic)
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PI	Principal investigator
RAG	Research advisory group
SRH	Sexual and reproductive health
STI	Sexually transmitted infection
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WHO	World Health Organization

Sexuality education programmes studied

Countries around the world use different names for CSE. The following programmes were the focus of this research:

Argentina (Buenos Aires Province) - Educación Sexual Integral (Comprehensive Sexuality Education)

Armenia - Healthy Lifestyles Programme

Lao People's Democratic Republic - Sexuality Education

Namibia - Life Skills Health Education

Nigeria (Lagos State) - Family Life and HIV/AIDS Education

Glossary of terms

The definitions in the below table represent the research team's understanding of the terms. Where officially recognized or accepted definitions exist, they are cited. Other definitions reflect how the terms are used in this study. Study participants did not have access to these definitions, so uses and understandings of these terms may differ in the quotes included in the report.

Administrator

'Administrators' are school personnel responsible for school management, including CSE programming. This includes roles such as the school principal, vice principal, director or assistant director.

Adolescent

WHO defines an 'adolescent' as a person between the ages of 10 and 19 (WHO, n.d.).

Bullying

UNESCO defines bullying as: 'characterized by an imbalance of power or strengths driven by societal and institutional norms. It is often repeated and manifests as unwanted interpersonal behaviour among students or school personnel that causes physical, social and emotional harm to the targeted individuals or groups, and the wider school community.' (UNESCO, 2024).

Cyberbullying

UNESCO defines cyberbullying as: 'being bullied by online messages, images, or via the phone' (UNESCO, 2024).

Comprehensive sexuality education

UNESCO defines CSE as: 'A structured and age-appropriate approach to educating young people about various aspects of sexuality. This includes information about human development, relationships, personal skills, sexual behaviour, and sexual health, emphasizing the importance of respect, consent, and gender equality. CSE aims to empower individuals to make informed choices, promote healthy attitudes toward sexuality, and contribute to overall well-being. It is designed to provide accurate information, foster critical thinking, and equip young people with the skills needed for healthy relationships.' (UNESCO et al., 2018).

Educator

An 'educator' is an umbrella term that refers to any school personnel – including teachers and administrators – who have a role in delivering or managing CSE programmes.

Healthy interpersonal relationships

This term is used to refer to physically, emotionally and mentally beneficial relations between individuals who have a connection based on mutual respect, trust and characterized by clear boundaries and open communication.

Intermediate-term outcome

For the purposes of this study, the term 'intermediate-term outcome' refers to outcomes that relate to the ways in which learners apply knowledge and skills in real life scenarios. Opportunities to apply the knowledge and skills may arise immediately following the completion of the relevant lessons, or at any point thereafter.

Learner

This term is used to refer to students enrolled in one of the schools participating in this study.

Parent

This term is used to refer to adults with overall responsibility for the health, well-being and development of a child; this could be biological or adoptive parents, stepparents, aunts/uncles, grandparents or foster parents.

Peer

This term is used to refer to a person who is of a similar age and going through a similar stage of life.

Relationship with parent or caregiver

These are relationships that involve the dynamic between a child and their parents or primary caregivers that are often characterised by support, communication, and discipline.

Relationship with peers

These are relationships with friends, classmates and those of the same age that are often characterised by support, cooperation, and mutual respect.

Relationship with self

This relationship includes self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-care practices, reflecting one's perception and treatment of oneself.

Romantic relationships

These are relationships characterized by attraction(s) between the partners that may or may not be sexual in nature, and may or may not include sexual activity.

School environment

This encompasses the overall atmosphere in the school, including interactions with teachers and peers, safety and inclusivity.

Sexual relationships

These are relationships characterized by sexual attraction and/or sexual activity. For this study, they are considered to be one type of romantic relationship.

Short-term outcome

'Short-term outcome' refers to the knowledge and skills gained through CSE which, together, develop learners' sense of 'preparedness' to navigate various relationships. Short-term outcomes should be observable immediately following learners' completion of the relevant lessons from the CSE curriculum on a particular topic.

Teacher

This term is used to refer to someone who has responsibility for classroom CSE delivery.

Violence

WHO defines violence as: 'the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation'. (WHO, 2014).

Executive summary

A growing global evidence base for CSE documents how well-implemented, in-school programmes can positively affect health and well-being outcomes of learners across diverse contexts. However, evidence gaps remain and more research is needed to understand CSE's full potential beyond health-related outcomes. In 2020, a UNESCO-convened expert consultation identified a gap in research regarding outcomes related to building healthy relationships during adolescence. To address this gap, UNESCO commissioned a study to explore how national CSE programmes affect learners' relationships in five contexts: Argentina (Buenos Aires Province), Armenia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Namibia and Nigeria (Lagos State).¹ This study had two objectives:

1. To explore learner- and school-level outcomes related to the knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills that may contribute to healthy interpersonal relationships.
2. To document the national and school-level contexts, including the programmatic inputs and mechanisms that shape the implementation of CSE, and their implications for achieving outcomes.

The study focused on three categories of relationships important to adolescent learners: relationships with parents and caregivers; relationships with peers and friends; and romantic relationships. It used a mixed-methods approach, with three main data collection activities. The study also included a desk review of existing reports and curricular documents. In each country, two schools were selected jointly by UNESCO and the respective Ministry of Education (MoE) based on the schools' support for and success in implementing the national or provincial sexuality education programme.

This report presents an overview of the study findings from all five countries. Although the study was not intended to be a comparative exercise, the report highlights differences in programme delivery, content and outcomes across and within these countries. In addition, it provides an initial framework for understanding how to develop measurements for advancing this area of CSE research and programming.

The design of each of the five sexuality education programmes was different, including in relation to: the

mode of integration, the breadth and depth of curricular content on each relationship topic, training opportunities and support for teachers, pedagogies used, and the nature of partnerships with external stakeholders. The study was not tasked with identifying the impact of specific variables on healthy relationships. However, findings underscored the importance of programme design – particularly teacher training – on relationship outcomes. They showed that, when teachers were trained not only in the content of CSE but also in participatory pedagogies, it transformed learners' experiences and improved educators' teaching across all subjects.

The study examined the school climate from the perspectives of learners and teachers, providing insights into both the alignment of CSE content with the wider school environment and the extent to which CSE is influencing relationships within schools. The findings highlighted how learning about healthy relationships happens both in and outside of CSE lessons. CSE programmes in all five countries incorporated values of inclusivity, respect, and gender equity and equality. However, these values were undermined where harmful disciplinary practices were used by educators or where violence, including bullying and cyberbullying, amongst peers was not addressed.

The learners who participated in the study expressed a desire for strong relationships with their parents and caregivers. The findings demonstrated the positive effects that CSE can have in this respect, particularly with regards to parent-child communication. Through CSE programmes, learners gained insight into their parents' perspectives and also developed empathy. This study did not include parents and was, therefore, unable to assess whether they observed the same changes in their relationships with their children, although teachers reported that some parents had commented on positive changes. The study also found that some learners were frustrated when their attempts to improve communication were not reciprocated by parents. Traditional hierarchies between parents and children persist and are sometimes reinforced in the classroom by CSE teachers. The findings also suggest that CSE programmes give insufficient attention to family violence, evidenced by learners' lack of preparedness to address this issue.

¹ The study was also conducted in Jamaica, after the conclusion of the five country analysis. The full findings from all six countries can be found in separate country reports.

The study found that CSE can help to cultivate healthy relationships with friends and peers. CSE programmes that include information on respectful peer relationships prepared learners to discern healthy and unhealthy friendships and to set boundaries. They also enhanced learners' understanding of differences based on ethnicity, gender identity and socio-economic status and increased empathy for their peers. Learners shared the challenges they face in navigating situations with peers in the physical and virtual realms. They reported that educators too often dismiss conflict and violence, simply telling learners to avoid such dynamics. They also described the influence of cyberbullying and online gossip through social media on the school environment, and the way this affects learners' levels of comfort, concentration and overall learning. Again, learners suggested that schools are not well equipped to support them to navigate these situations.

In most of the study contexts, CSE content on romantic relationships emphasized the potential risks and harms of such relationships. This is underlined by norms that emphasize waiting until marriage to engage in sexual relationships. Educators found it challenging to navigate personal beliefs and perceived obligations to discourage romantic attachment. Some were aware that adolescents engage in romantic relationships regardless of social norms, but there was limited guidance on how teachers should navigate this reality. CSE programmes recognized and provided some space for learners to explore the influence of gendered dynamics in romantic relationships, although this varied in depth and relevance.

This study is an important first step in expanding the evidence base around CSE. The findings show that CSE has the potential to increase learners' knowledge of key relationships topics and to develop their social and emotional skills and that this can, in turn, improve the quality of their relationships with parents, peers and romantic partners with a positive impact on health and well-being.



Introduction

A growing global evidence base documents how well-implemented in-school sexuality education programmes can positively affect health and well-being outcomes in diverse contexts. However, significant evidence gaps remain and more research is needed to understand the full potential of sexuality education programming in schools, including its impact beyond the health behaviour-related outcomes that are most commonly studied.

In 2022, UNESCO commissioned an exploratory study to improve understanding of the ways in which national, school-based sexuality education programmes may influence learners' relationships with parents, peers, and current or future romantic partners. As the first study of its kind, it focused on learning from the experiences of countries with long-standing, well-implemented sexuality education programmes and, specifically, from schools that adhered to the design of the national or provincial programme. The five contexts selected to participate in the study were: Argentina (Buenos Aires Province), Armenia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Namibia and Nigeria (Lagos State). In each context, two secondary schools were chosen as study sites.²

The study was cross-sectional and employed qualitative and quantitative methods with secondary school learners, school administrators and CSE educators. It used a survey and focus group discussions to collect quantitative and qualitative data on learners' recall of relationships topics covered in the national sexuality education programme; level of preparedness to navigate relationships; perceptions about changes in their relationships with parents, peers and romantic partners as a result of their learning; and their perceptions about the ways in which CSE teaching and learning methods and the wider school environment affected their learning and relationships. Through key informant interviews, teachers and administrators provided their perspectives on teaching and learning methods; programme implementation, including challenges; changes in relationships between

teachers and learners and between learners; and how the content of the sexuality education programme affects the dynamics of the school environment.

This report only highlights the key findings from the study, as it was not possible to present the full breadth and depth of findings across the five contexts. Country-specific findings are available as stand-alone reports. In each country, the sexuality education programmes showed positive effects on learners and their relationships with parents, peers and romantic partners and prepared learners to navigate these relationships through developing key social and emotional skills. The study found that, as a result of school-based sexuality education, learners' communication with their parents improved and their levels of empathy

² The study was also conducted in Jamaica, after the conclusion of the five country analysis. The full findings from all six countries can be found in separate country reports..

for and understanding of peers increased. Regarding romantic relationships, learners felt more capable of identifying unhealthy dynamics and more confident in leaving unhealthy relationships. However, there were gaps in teaching important topics including bullying, cyberbullying, sexual consent, and violence within families. In addition, the study highlighted challenges in ensuring that school environments are conducive, safe spaces for learners to navigate relationships and reflect core CSE values including respect, empathy and kindness.

Given the diversity of country contexts, the study findings do not provide specific, prescriptive strategies for CSE programmes seeking to promote healthy relationships. However, the findings do offer useful insights to guide future research and programme implementation. They highlight the need for further context-specific research on CSE curricula and delivery, and the characteristics of supportive school environments that promote healthy relationships during adolescence and beyond.

Rationale

The global evidence base supporting CSE has grown substantially over the past several decades. However, key gaps remain. CSE programme evaluations continue to measure effectiveness in relation to population-level health outcomes, neglecting the broader potential of CSE (UNESCO, 2022). Critical gaps exist in understanding of the social and behavioural outcomes that result from classroom learning and the context in which CSE is delivered. More research is needed to capture how CSE affects adolescents' lives and, specifically, its effect on the relationships that have the greatest influence on their development and well-being, including relationships with parents, peers and romantic partners.

Significant advances have been made in many countries in integrating sexuality education into national policy and curricula. According to a recent global status report on sexuality education, 85% of countries have policies that are supportive of sexuality education and cover relevant topics in their national curriculum (UNESCO, 2021). More than two in three countries address love, marriage, partnerships and family in their curricula, and more than six in ten countries cover topics such as gender norms and sexual and gender-based violence (UNESCO, 2023). However, measurement frameworks have not kept pace with these advances, and fewer than four in ten countries monitor CSE through their education management information systems (UNESCO, 2023).

Where measurement frameworks for CSE programmes do exist, they emphasize health behaviour and educational outcomes such as early and unintended pregnancies, incidence of HIV or sexually transmitted infections (STI), condom or contraceptive use, child marriage, and school dropout or continuation rates (UNESCO, 2022). This is

despite evidence that highlights the importance of learning on issues such as gender equity, and of social and emotional skills (Goldfarb and Lieberman, 2021; Haberland and Rogow, 2015; Kirby, 2001).

There is growing recognition of the need for more rigorous studies that assess the broader dimensions of health and well-being linked to CSE, especially in low- and middle-income countries (Goldfarb and Lieberman, 2021; Knerr and Montgomery, 2016; UNESCO, 2022). Recommendations generated by a 2020 UNESCO-convened expert consultation also reinforced the need to strengthen the evidence base on a range of outcomes including evidence concerning 'healthy relationships' (UNESCO, 2022). The expert consultation also highlighted gaps related to measurement of proximate effects of programme implementation (those that can be linked to classroom learning) and the critical need to understand the contexts that shape programme delivery and learning experiences (UNESCO, 2022).

Learning about healthy relationships is critical for learners, as relationships with parents, peers and romantic partners feature heavily in their lives during adolescence, and the presence and quality of such relationships shapes their experiences both within and beyond the school environment. When these relationships are positive, they have the potential to contribute to an adolescent's broader development, health and well-being (Blum et al., 2022).

Relationships with parents and other caregivers³ are central to adolescent development. While adolescence can be a period of conflict with parents (Laursen and Collins, 2009), adolescents typically want strong

³ The term 'parent' is used in this report to refer to parents and non-parent caregivers.

relationships with their parents (Bello et al., 2017; Blum et al., 2022; McNeely and Blanchard, 2009). Adolescents' strong connectedness with parents has been linked with fewer emotional problems, fewer suicide attempts, less conduct disorder, better school performance, higher self-esteem, and less involvement in violence and substance use (Blum et al., 2022). In addition, open dialogue between parents and adolescents about sexual and reproductive health (SRH) topics specifically has been shown to positively influence SRH-related behaviours, including delaying sex and increasing use of contraceptives (Gavin et al., 2015; Sievwright et al., 2023; Widman et al., 2016). However, many parents feel uneasy or ill-equipped to discuss topics related to sexuality, which can create challenges in effectively guiding their children (Kågesten et al., 2016; Sievwright et al., 2023). There is limited but encouraging evidence that educational programmes can enhance parent-child communication on SRH topics, highlighting the importance of involving parents in these discussions (Gavin et al., 2015; Usonwu et al., 2021; De Meyer et al., 2024).

Peer relationships help adolescents to develop the essential social skills and emotional intelligence that support their development and contribute to their overall well-being (Laursen and Collins, 2009). Peer groups provide a setting in which adolescents experiment with roles and behaviours as they develop individual identities (Brown, 2004). Although peer relationships can have positive and negative dimensions, the negative influences of peer relationships are far better documented (Fine et al., 2022). Peer relationships have been linked, for example, with enhanced risk taking and substance use during adolescence (Hawker and Boulton, 2000; Telzer et al., 2015), reinforcement of inequitable gender norms (Kågesten et al., 2016), acceptance of violence perpetration (Tharp et al., 2013), and poor academic achievement (Ryan, 2001). Additionally, peer-to-peer violence, including cyberbullying and bullying based on gender or sexuality, has severe and multifaceted impacts on academic success and mental health, increasing the risk of anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts among adolescents (Fine et al., 2022; Poteat et al., 2011; WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2024). Although limited, research on the benefits of supportive peer relationships shows their potential to promote positive social and emotional functioning (Blum et al., 2022), better mental health outcomes (Hawker and Boulton, 2000; Telzer et al., 2015), and higher academic achievement (Ryan, 2001).

Adolescents navigate a wide range of social and cultural norms around romantic relationships. Much of the evidence on adolescents' romantic relationships focuses on the potential risks and threats to adolescents' health and well-being that can arise from gender inequitable relationships, such as violence, and from sexual relationships, such as adolescent pregnancy, STIs and HIV (Fine et al., 2022; Kågesten and van Reeuwijk, 2021; Viejo et al., 2015). There is some evidence on the potential of CSE programmes that incorporate skills-based approaches, gender equitable norms and attention to power dynamics to support learners in navigating healthy romantic relationships (Lohan and Lopez, 2023). Limited evidence suggests that, in some settings, adolescents experiencing positive dynamics in romantic relationships also feel emotionally supported and socially connected (Viejo et al., 2015).

In addition to evidence about the importance of specific types of relationships, research underscores the importance of the school environment in reinforcing the positive characteristics of healthy relationships through learning in and out of the classroom environment.

'The quality and impact of school-based CSE is dependent not only on the teaching process – including the capacity of teachers, the pedagogical approaches employed and the teaching and learning materials used – but also on the whole school environment. This is manifested through school rules and in-school practices, among other aspects.' (UNESCO et al., 2018)

Objectives and research questions

This exploratory study aimed to generate evidence on the potential contributions of national, school-based sexuality education to adolescents' healthy relationships. It gathered data from countries with long-standing, well-implemented programmes and sites selected for their adherence to those programmes. The study also sought to document the school environment and programme inputs, such as curricula and teacher training, and their implications for sexuality education content and delivery and learners' engagement with the programme.

Specifically, the objectives of the study were to:

1. Explore learner- and school-level outcomes of CSE related to knowledge, skills and preparedness to navigate healthy interpersonal relationships with parents, peers and romantic partners.
2. Document school environments and programmatic inputs relevant to shaping the implementation of CSE programmes, and their implications for achieving healthy relationship outcomes.

Based on these objectives, questions were formulated to guide the research, including tool development, data collection and analysis (Table 1).

Table 1. Research questions, by objective

Objective 1: To explore learner- and school-level outcomes of CSE related to knowledge, skills and preparedness to navigate healthy interpersonal relationships with parents, peers and romantic partners.

- ☒ **RQ1.1** To what extent are learners aware that they receive 'healthy relationships' content through the CSE programme, and what knowledge and skills do they recall learning?
- ☒ **RQ1.2** What do educators consider part of 'healthy relationships' learning, and recall teaching through the CSE programme?
- ☒ **RQ1.3** How prepared do learners feel to apply the knowledge and skills in the context of relationships with parents, peers and present or future romantic partners?
- ☒ **RQ1.4** What, if any, shifts in dynamics of learners' relationships with parents, peers and romantic partners do learners and educators attribute to CSE programming?
- ☒ **RQ1.5** What healthy relationships-related content would learners like to be included in the CSE programme?

Objective 2: To document school environments and programmatic inputs relevant to shaping the implementation of CSE programmes, and their implications for achieving healthy relationship outcomes.

- ☒ **RQ2.1** How do learners and educators describe the general school social environment?
- ☒ **RQ2.2** What practices are typical among school personnel, including teaching and learning, and discipline?
- ☒ **RQ2.3** Which modes of delivery are used for the CSE programme? What non-school personnel and resources support schools in delivering programming?
- ☒ **RQ2.4** How prepared and supported do educators feel to deliver the CSE programme?
- ☒ **RQ2.5** What challenges do educators encounter in delivering the programme?
- ☒ **RQ2.6** How do educators and learners describe the relationship between elements of the broader school environment, healthy relationships programming, and their implications for achieving intended healthy relationship outcomes?



Methodology

The study used a standard cross-sectional, mixed-methods approach in all five countries. There were three data collection activities in the selected schools: key informant interviews (KIIs) with school administrators and teachers; surveys with learners; and focus group discussions (FGDs) with learners. Global templates for the study tools were adapted and translated in consultative processes in each country.

The study approach, tools and country-specific adaptations reflected input from UNESCO regional and country offices, Ministry of Education (MoE) officials and other stakeholders who contributed to the selection of schools, research logistics, protocol development, tool and methodological adaptations, and validation of findings. In addition, UNESCO convened a Research Advisory Group (RAG) consisting of global CSE experts, including, experts from universities in Belgium and South Africa, civil society organizations engaged in CSE advocacy and research from Malaysia, Colombia and Australia, and scientist from the World Health Organisation (WHO). The RAG advised on the study design and tools and reviewed the findings.

Country selection

UNESCO's headquarters and regional offices and the research team jointly selected the study countries, with consideration given to regional diversity. A 'best case scenario' approach was used to select the five contexts, with the following criteria used to guide the selection:

- ☒ A government-led (national) sexuality education programme designed and delivered through public (state) schools that had been implemented for at least five years;
- ☒ Existing documentation or research reports on the national sexuality education programme and its implementation through materials such as curricula, training materials, evaluative reports and national educational monitoring systems;

- ☒ Historical and current investment in teacher training and/or teaching materials;
- ☒ Supportive conditions in the respective MoE for conducting research and accessing schools for primary data collection; and
- ☒ Inclusion of healthy relationship outcomes in curricula for secondary school education.

Given the exploratory nature of the study, the five contexts were chosen for their potential to document design and implementation and generate relevant insights. The intent was not to evaluate or compare programmes.

School selection

Much like the country selection process, schools were chosen based on how well the CSE programme was being implemented. In each context, two secondary schools were purposively selected as representing 'best case scenario' schools, in order to document implementation that is closely aligned with programme design and that results in optimum learning and outcomes compared with typical schools. The schools selected were intended to reflect both real-world implementation conditions and to represent sites where support for the programme is considered to be high and relatively well-resourced.

UNESCO headquarters, regional and country offices, MoE officials and other stakeholders, such as UNESCO implementing partners or other non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the research team collaborated in the selection of study schools. The criteria used to select 'best case scenario' schools were as follows:

1. Schools have been implementing the sexuality education programme for an extended period of time (for example, for more than 5 years or

since development of the most recently adopted curriculum);

2. Schools have a high level of support from administrators and educators for the national (or provincial) programme; and
3. Schools have implemented the national or provincial sexuality education programme with the highest degree of fidelity in terms of content, pedagogy and teacher training/skills.

UNESCO and the research team encouraged MoE officials to draw on available data to guide the selection of study schools. In some countries, specifically Lao People's Democratic Republic and Namibia, ministries opted to select schools that had received targeted support from UNESCO or international NGOs over a prolonged period of time, as relationships with administrators were already established.

Once selected, schools were assigned as either School A or School B by the study team. Table 2 provides an overview of the ten selected schools.

Table 2. Profiles of selected schools

	School A	School B
Buenos Aires Province, Argentina	☒ Buenos Aires Province (semi-urban/suburban) ☒ Grades 1-6	☒ Buenos Aires Province (semi-urban/suburban) ☒ Grades 1-6
Armenia	☒ Tavush Region (urban) ☒ Grades 1-9	☒ Tavush Region (rural) ☒ Grades 1-12
Lao People's Democratic Republic	☒ Vientiane (peri-urban) ☒ Grades M1-M7 (Grades 6-12)	☒ Oudomxay Province (rural) ☒ Grades M1-M7 (Grades 6-12)
Namibia	☒ Khomas Region (urban) ☒ Grades 8-12	☒ Kavango West Region (remote rural location) ☒ Grades 8-12
Lagos State, Nigeria	☒ Lagos District 4 (urban) ☒ Grades JSS1-SS3 (Grades 7-12)	☒ Lagos District 4 (urban) ☒ Grades JSS1-SS3 (Grades 7-12)

Study tool and protocol development

The research team reviewed previously published study instruments and literature, and consulted with the RAG and external experts, to determine whether the study could use any existing tools. However, this process found that there were no existing, validated tools that measure relationships outcomes of CSE so new tools had to be developed.

As a first step, the research team mapped the available national curricular documents in the countries against the key relationships topics and learning objectives for ages 9 to 12 and 12 to 15 in the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (ITGSE). All five curricula included cross-cutting components of gender, social norms, characteristics of healthy relationships and references to three categories of relationships to be studied (relationships with parents, peers and friends, and romantic relationships). Materials varied in terms of the breadth and depth of coverage, and the commonalities formed the basis for the draft tools. Due to the wide variation in content on romantic relationships, and whether messages about sexuality or sexual relationships were included, the study focused on

qualities of romantic relationships that did not specifically relate to sexual contact. Tools developed included questions about the three types of relationships and cross-cutting relationships topics. To address the second study objective on documenting the school environment, questions were added to all of the tools, in particular in the key informant interview guide, about related topics.

For each type of relationship, the study collected both teacher and learner perspectives on what content was taught and its possible effects. This included open-ended questions for teachers on what topical content they included in lessons and observations about how learners' behaviours and relationship quality might be affected as a result. The learner survey and focus group discussions focused on knowledge recall, preparedness to navigate relationships, and the quality of relationships. The use of hypothetical scenarios in focus group discussions allowed learners to reflect on ways to handle differences in perspectives and conflicts in relationships. Table 3 provides an overview of the topics covered in each of the data collection tools, which are accessible on the [UNESCO Health and Education Resource Centre](https://healtheducationresources.unesco.org/library/documents/data-collection-tools-learning-about-healthy-relationships).⁴

Table 3. Content covered in data collection tools

Tool	Overview of content covered
Educator and administrator key informant interviews	☒ Overarching programme structure and curricula ☒ Teacher training and other support for the programme within the school and outside of the school ☒ School climate and relationships between peers ☒ Content and related adaptations made to the CSE programme to deliver in classroom settings ☒ Observations of changes in relationships between peers and within the school environment as a result of CSE ☒ Experiences, reflections and recommendations for improving programming
Learner survey	☒ Socio-demographic questions ☒ General recall of the programme and its content ☒ School environment, including relationships with trusted adults and between learners ☒ Knowledge recall on topics relevant to relationships with parents, peers and romantic partners ☒ Preparedness to navigate relationships with parents, peers and romantic partners and changes noted as a result of CSE ☒ Quality of relationships with parents, peers and romantic partners and changes noted as a result of CSE

⁴ <https://healtheducationresources.unesco.org/library/documents/data-collection-tools-learning-about-healthy-relationships>

Learner focus group discussions

- ☒ General recall of the programme and its content
- ☒ Perspectives on the general dynamics of the school environment, including relationships with trusted adults and between learners
- ☒ Application of knowledge and skills learnt in CSE in relationships with parents, peers and romantic partners
- ☒ Responses to scenarios based on challenging situations with parents, peers and romantic partners

Pilot testing and adaptation

Study tools were piloted in Lagos State before data collection in any of the five countries. The team piloted the tools in a school in an urban district in Lagos that was not one of the selected study sites. The objectives of the pilot were to test all three tools ahead of data collection and to assess the feasibility of using the Kobo Collect version of the survey tool on tablets in school settings. The pilot also aimed to refine the study tools for Lagos State and procedures for all countries. Pilot activities included surveys, focus group discussions, educator interviews and post-survey interviews with learners. Twenty-seven learners participated in the survey, and 20 participated in the focus groups. One educator was interviewed to test the educator tool. Insights from this pilot informed the main data collection process, ensuring

efficiency and minimizing disruptions to the regular school timetable.

Following the pilot in Lagos State, study teams in the other four countries adapted the global tools to their context through consultative workshops with UNESCO, MoE and other stakeholders. Adaptations included changes in language to refer to the CSE programme in terminology familiar to participants; addition of language that clarified terminology used in the tools, particularly for learners; and, in one instance, editing the question on consent due to a younger age group participating in the study. Other than these minor adaptations, there were no substantial changes to the global tools in each country.

Ethical review

Study protocols were reviewed by local scientific ethics committees in each country. As mentioned above, in order to ensure a common approach, the research team developed a global protocol template that was then adapted to the country context through consultative processes led by each country's principal investigator (PI). The protocols included detailed consent scripts and procedures for all study participants in accordance with local guidance. In most contexts, informed consent was required from parents for the participation of learners under the age of 18. All learners also gave informed consent if over 18, and assent if under 18, on the day of their participation. Educators and administrators gave informed consent verbally or in writing according to local requirements.

In each country, the PI liaised with UNESCO regional and country offices and the respective MoE to adapt and finalize the protocol for submission to the ethics committee, together with the adapted and translated tools. In all countries, the MoE approved the protocol and tools before submission to the ethics committee. Protocol submissions were made to relevant local ethical review bodies. In four countries, these were associated with the Ministry of Health, and in one country, a university. Approval was given by ethics committees in all five countries.

Sampling and data collection

Non-probability sampling techniques were applied for this study – convenience and purposive sampling. These techniques are deemed appropriate when a study's findings are not intended to be generalizable to the entirety of a population (Etikan et al., 2015). Convenience sampling, which was used for selecting learners, is deemed appropriate in the circumstances applicable to this study: 'a) when you plan to obtain people's perceptions and attitudes, b) if you intend to conduct a test pilot for your survey, and c) if you plan to produce hypotheses being tested in detail in upcoming studies' (Golzar et al., 2022). Given the decision to learn from two 'best case scenario' schools in each context, the potential study population was small, well-defined and easily accessible once the schools were selected, making convenience sampling a suitable approach. CSE educator and administrator participants were selected using purposive sampling, which is appropriate to use where specific individuals are particularly knowledgeable or well-informed about the subject under study (Etikan et al., 2015).

The study sought to recruit 100-150 learners for the survey and 20-30 learners for the focus groups in each school. As Table 4 shows, the actual numbers of participants varied, depending on the size of the school and the availability of learners on the scheduled data collection days. Eligibility criteria – including the age or grade of learners – varied from country to country based upon how and during which grades healthy relationships content was integrated into the school curriculum. Generally, all learners enrolled in the designated grade(s) were eligible and invited to participate; but each individual school made a decision about the timing of the data collection that influenced which eligible learners could participate. All educators and administrators involved in teaching or administering the CSE programme within the schools were invited to participate in the study. Those who consented to participate were interviewed.

Table 4. Participant numbers and profiles, by country

Country	Educator participants (# by role and gender)	Learner grades	Survey participants (# by gender and mean age)	FGD participants (# of participants, # by gender)	FGD groups (# of groups, gender composition)
Argentina (Buenos Aires Province)	n = 8 Educators: 3F, 1M Administrators: 4F	Grades 3 to 6	n = 211 Male n = 79 Female n = 113 Other identity n = 19 Mean age = 16.6	n = 45 Gender data not collected ⁵	n = 6 All mixed
Armenia	n = 6 Educators: 4F Administrators: 2F	Grade 9	n = 79 Male n = 39 Female n = 40 Mean age = 13.9	n = 35 Male n = 7 Female n = 28	n = 4 All mixed
Lao People's Democratic Republic	n = 15 Educators: 6F, 5M Administrators*: 2F, 2M *All administrators also taught CSE	Grades M6 and M7	n = 300 Male n = 141 Female n = 154 Other identity n = 5 Mean age = 16.7	n = 48 Male n = 23 Female n = 25	n = 5 2F, 2M and 1 mixed
Namibia	n = 7 Educators: 4F, 1M Administrators: 1F, 1M	Grades 9 to 12	n = 233 Male n = 84 Female n = 141 Other identity n = 8 Mean age = 16.2	n = 92 Male n = 39 Female n = 53	n = 11 5F, 4M, 2 mixed
Nigeria (Lagos State)	n = 8 Educators: 4F Administrators: 2F, 2M	Grade SS2 and SS3	n = 201 Male n = 103 Female n = 98 Mean age = 15.9	n = 67 Male n = 32 Female n = 35	n = 8 4F, 4M

5 At the request of learners and school authorities, gender data was not collected from focus group participants.

Data cleaning and analysis

Qualitative data: All participants agreed to allow interviews and focus groups to be audio recorded, and researchers also took notes on discussions. Audio data from interviews and focus groups not collected in English or Spanish were translated and transcribed into English for analysis. National PIs reviewed transcripts for clarity and fidelity to audio-recorded data. The study team used both deductive and inductive approaches to analyse data. A team of global researchers drafted a common basic codebook designed for all studies. In each country, the PI and members of the global research team reviewed and adapted the codebook and code definitions. Dedoose, a collaborative qualitative analysis software, was used for analysis. The codebook and subsequent analysis followed a structure similar to interview and focus group guides, which were organized by areas such as the school environment, healthy relationships content, and relationship types. Analysis included attention to positive and negative features of school dynamics, programming, and relationships, as well as areas of consensus or disagreement within or between groups and cross-cutting issues such as gender dynamics and norms.

Quantitative data: Learners' survey data were cleaned and analyzed in a three-step process that included: data cleaning, data exploration and focused analysis in R Studio. Data cleaning involved the anonymization of schools and participants, management of outliers and missing data, and harmonization of each country's data set with the global database. The data exploration stage involved analyzing emerging patterns in the data, including trends by gender and school, as well as across the different sections of survey. Finally, for the focused analysis, the research team produced specific tables and visualizations for the different sections of interest. A specific analysis was done on survey items related to violence.

The study was not designed to be comparative, although this report reflects thematic analysis across all five country reports. This thematic analysis was done in an attempt to identify patterns in national sexuality education programming, but it was approached with caution given the highly diverse contexts and design and implementation modes of each programme.

Limitations

This study is not representative of all schools or learners in any of the selected countries, and findings cannot be generalized. As described above, schools were purposively selected in order to facilitate learning from contexts supportive of CSE programming. The study was not an evaluation, with no baseline, endline or control group. As such, the findings are based on reflection and recall of participants' learning and skills development overall, and likely reflect overall perceptions of educational experiences rather than those that might be distinct or specifically related to CSE. Positive outcomes are more likely than not to have also been influenced by other factors, such as strong school management, rather than the CSE programme alone.

Social desirability bias and potential confusion about the role of researchers in relation to authorities were

also a potential limitation in qualitative data collection, as participants may have wished to give a positive view of the programme or to impress researchers with knowledge or commitment to the aims of CSE. Researchers sought to reduce the influence of bias in qualitative activities by establishing rapport with participants through ice breakers in focus group sessions and fully explaining the study and its objectives to all participants.

Given that no previous studies on this topic had been conducted, the measures and tools used had not been previously validated. Every effort was taken to base the development of the tools on the evidence-based ITGSE and the content of countries' own curricular documents. Further, extensive consultation was carried out with experts within and outside of UNESCO to validate the approach and tools.



Programme delivery and school environment findings

The findings in this section relate to the study's second objective: to document school environments and programmatic inputs relevant to shaping the implementation of CSE programmes, and their implications for achieving healthy relationships outcomes. The research questions related to this objective – on CSE programme design, delivery and content and on the school environment – were important for framing findings about learning and outcomes related to the first objective of the study. For this reason, these findings are presented ahead of those related to healthy relationships.

CSE programme design, delivery and content



Relevant research questions

- RQ2.3** Which modes of delivery are used for the CSE programme?
What non-school personnel and resources support schools in delivering programming?
- RQ2.4** How prepared and supported do educators feel to deliver the CSE programme?
- RQ2.5** What challenges do educators encounter in delivering the programme?

Findings relate to national programme design as available in policy and curricular document reviews. Data collected at school level include teacher and administrator reflections on programme design and content, teachers' roles, training and support, and practices, such as engagement of external stakeholders in CSE delivery. Data on classroom practices, including teaching and learning methods used to deliver CSE, were drawn from both educator and learner perspectives.

Programme design

The history and status of CSE within the educational system varies between the study contexts. In Buenos Aires Province, Namibia and Lagos State, sexuality education programmes had been in place nationwide for 20 years or more, while Armenia and Lao People's Democratic Republic were in the process of scaling up relatively new programmes and had ongoing pilots in different regions.

Each country's CSE programme design was unique, with variations in the division of responsibility between teachers and external providers, such as NGOs, and the integration of content into school curricula (see Table 5). Regardless of design, time and resource allocations for CSE programming were common challenges.

In all five contexts, classroom teachers had the primary responsibility for delivering CSE programming. The nature and extent of NGO engagement in CSE delivery varied between contexts. CSE programmes in Buenos Aires Province and Armenia were led and implemented

solely by school personnel, without NGO engagement. In Namibia, Lagos State and Lao People's Democratic Republic, CSE programmes were implemented with significant involvement from international donors and NGOs. In these three contexts, NGOs not only provided resources for programmes, but also, in some cases, played formal roles in delivering CSE content within the classroom or through extracurricular activities. In Lao People's Democratic Republic, for example, international NGOs work closely with schools, managing extracurricular clubs and activities designed to reinforce and build on topics in the school curriculum. In Lagos State and Namibia, NGOs fulfilled formal roles in areas such as teacher training as well as providing extracurricular or supplemental learning. In Lagos State, many NGOs use the national Family Life and HIV/AIDS Education (FLHE) curriculum to guide their work. In Namibia, schools engaged NGOs on an ad hoc basis and NGOs typically cover content that individual teachers do not feel comfortable with or do not have time to cover, such as content on sex, contraception and romantic relationships.

Study participants in Lao People's Democratic Republic, Namibia and Lagos State characterized NGO involvement in CSE delivery as generally positive. However, learner and teacher responses suggested that the roles of outside providers were inconsistently defined and managed in practice. Educators often lacked awareness of the messages NGOs were providing to learners and efforts to ensure that NGO messages aligned with the aims or content in the national sexuality education curricula were not systematic. For example, few educators could fully explain the relationship between the curricular content and the content delivered by these external providers, suggesting that coordination is weak.

Table 5. Models of CSE delivery in study countries

Context	Stand-alone subject	Integrated across carrier subjects	NGO engagement
Buenos Aires Province		x	
Armenia	x		
Lao People's Democratic Republic		x	x
Namibia	x	x	x
Lagos State ⁶	x	x	x

⁶ In most Nigerian states, the Family Life and HIV Education (FLHE) curriculum is integrated into existing subjects such as Social Studies, Biology, and Civic Education. However, in some states, there have been reports of FLHE being offered as a stand-alone subject or as part of extracurricular activities, depending on local education policies or the level of engagement from stakeholders such as NGOs or international organizations. This variability often depends on the state government's approach to implementing the FLHE curriculum and the resources available for its delivery.

Curricular integration of CSE content

In all five countries, the educational system prioritizes national exams for measuring learner achievement, and CSE content is not assessed through exams.

Each programme had a distinctive approach to CSE curricular integration. In Buenos Aires Province, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Namibia and Lagos State, CSE was integrated in carrier subjects. In Buenos Aires Province, CSE content was taught in subjects as diverse as English, arts and music; teachers in these subjects were expected to have some competency in CSE. In Lao People's Democratic Republic, three carrier subjects, biology, civics and ICT, integrated CSE content, and manuals with suggestions for integration were available to teachers of those subjects. Armenia's 'healthy lifestyles' programme was the only stand-alone CSE delivery model. In Armenia, any teacher can volunteer for CSE training, regardless of their subject expertise.

Educators discussed the design of sexuality education programmes and the way in which they are delivered. A common challenge in all contexts was the limited time available for teaching CSE. Teachers in countries where CSE is integrated into carrier subjects said that they have limited time to cover core content for those subjects and that this left little time for CSE topics. In Armenia, the only country where it is taught as a stand-alone subject, teachers also considered the time allocated to CSE content in the school timetable to be inadequate. In all contexts, the lack of time for CSE is perceived to be related to its status as a non-examinable subject. There were few incentives for school administrators to prioritise CSE and allocation of human and material resources for the subject. Educators suggested that the low priority given to CSE and its status as a non-examinable subject was also demotivating for learners. As one teacher in Namibia said:

'The only thing is that assessment does not affect their progress, they do not take it seriously ... When I give them written or group work activities, they do not enjoy doing homework, because it is not an examinable subject, and they do not put much effort. Even if I am assessed, it does not affect my results. Only a few put in the effort.'

For some educators, including biology and civics teachers in Lao People's Democratic Republic, integrated programming had benefits. These teachers commented on the richness that CSE brings to their respective

subjects; they enjoyed weaving CSE content into their lessons so that learners make connections between topics. In addition, educators in Lao People's Democratic Republic, although not in other integrated contexts, highlighted the way in which integrating CSE provided opportunities for sharing and learning between teachers within their departments.

Healthy relationships content

In all five contexts, CSE curricular documents included general references to healthy, positive or constructive relationships topics. They all also provided guidance on content on cross-cutting values and skills relevant to multiple types of relationships and situations, including:

- ☒ Seeking help
- ☒ Respectful communication
- ☒ Negotiation
- ☒ Critical thinking and factors that influence decision making
- ☒ Resisting peer pressure
- ☒ Thinking about responsibility in future relationships

Relationships with parents, peers and romantic partners were addressed in all of the sexuality education programmes' aims and content, although this varied in terms of depth and breadth. The level of detail in learning objectives for each type of relationship also varied greatly. Review of available curricular documents found a range of topics and types of content for the relationship categories used for this study (see Table 6). A full mapping of relationships content for each of the five contexts can be found on the [UNESCO Health and Education Resource Centre](https://healtheducationresources.unesco.org/library/documents/data-collection-tools-learning-about-healthy-relationships).⁷

⁷ <https://healtheducationresources.unesco.org/library/documents/data-collection-tools-learning-about-healthy-relationships>

Table 6. Overarching curricular topics related to healthy relationships in the five study countries

Parent-child relationships	
Argentina (Buenos Aires Province)	Included throughout, with cross-cutting topics such as rights, gender equality, respect, values
Armenia	Healthy relationships in the family, prevention of family violence
Lao People's Democratic Republic	Types of relationships, child rights
Namibia	Family relationships are part of overarching/cross-cutting content, including identifying forms of violence, personal values, respect, empathy; specific family relationship topics include family studies, social values and rights, gender roles, rights and norms, conflicts and violence
Nigeria (Lagos State)	Family, types of family, responsibilities of family members, rights of the child, changes that may affect the family and the feelings these changes may cause, factors that enhance good family relationships
Peer relationships and friendships	
Argentina (Buenos Aires Province)	Examples that address peer relationships included in cross-cutting content, such as respect, non-discrimination, violence and violence prevention, gender equality
Armenia	Friendship, gender roles and gender stereotypes, gender equality, forms of violence and harmful stereotypes, how to respond to violence, bullying and cyberbullying, prevention of violence and bullying
Lao People's Democratic Republic	Respect, friendship, safe use of social media
Namibia	Friendship, respect and choices, bullying and cyberbullying, abusive relationships, 'good and bad touch'
Nigeria (Lagos State)	Choice of friends, types of friendships, importance of friendship, application of various friendship skills (initiation, sustaining, termination), handling negative peer pressure
Romantic relationships	
Argentina (Buenos Aires Province)	Respect, empathy, love, responsible sexuality within a human rights framework
Armenia	Healthy relationships, personal boundaries, how to effectively express your own opinions and show emotions, what is love and falling in love?
Lao People's Democratic Republic	Power and gender roles, child marriage, attitudes toward sexuality, decision making in sexual relationships
Namibia	How to identify pressure to have sexual intercourse, abusive relationships, violence, contraception, gender inequality
Nigeria (Lagos State)	Definition of love, loving behaviours, ways of expressing loving behaviours, modes of enhancing loving relationships

Analysis of sexuality education programme objectives and content highlighted the lack of a universal definition of positive or healthy relationships. Across study contexts, some features were common, such as promoting respect or rejecting violence. In some cases, these values were articulated clearly, but in others they were more implicit.

The Educación Sexual Integral (ESI) programme in Buenos Aires Province was the most explicit in its articulation of human rights and respect for diversity as cross-cutting themes, though all programmes included respect for differences and gender equality.

All programmes incorporated messaging around the expectation that adults, including teachers and parents, were important sources of guidance and advice. To varying degrees, they also highlighted adult obligations to earn young people's respect, including fair and proportionate discipline, and appropriate boundaries. This appeared in objectives and content of topics such as family violence, sexual harassment, child marriage, and trafficking.

Teacher training and support

The approach to teacher training differed between the five contexts. Each had policies intended to promote quality teaching through systematic training. Longstanding programmes tended to include both pre- and in-service training in their design, although this was not always implemented. Newer programmes had gaps in in-service training, although it was not clear whether this was the intention or due to the relatively recent introduction of programmes in resource-constrained settings. Training providers also varied across contexts and included both government and NGO providers.

Pre-service CSE training is included in teacher training colleges in Buenos Aires Province, Namibia and Lagos State. In Buenos Aires Province, pre-service training has been integrated into teacher training, but the teachers interviewed had graduated prior to this and so had only received ESI training after starting to teach the curriculum. There are also optional subsidized courses and diplomas that motivated teachers can access in Buenos Aires Province. In Namibia and Lagos State, some educators had received pre-service training. In Armenia and Lao People's Democratic Republic, pre-service training on sexuality education is not available and educators relied on in-service training. In Armenia, teachers who volunteer to teach healthy lifestyles receive a three-day, government-run, in-service training before classes begin. Teachers who taught healthy lifestyles in schools piloting the new curriculum had recently received training. In Lao People's Democratic Republic, some subject teachers had received in-service sexuality education training provided by the Ministry of Education and Sports and described being asked to 'cascade' the training to colleagues in their department. However, other teachers ostensibly involved in the programme had not received training.

Teachers interviewed in Lagos State, Namibia and Lao People's Democratic Republic all mentioned receiving supplemental training from NGOs. The availability of

these training opportunities varied and appeared to be linked to the existence of donor-funded programmes with training components, rather than part of routine skills building. In Lao People's Democratic Republic, the international NGOs engaged in CSE programme implementation in both study schools trained and supported teachers on a regular basis.

Most teachers who participated in the study reported that their training had included both CSE content and pedagogy. The pedagogical components were viewed as particularly valuable, especially for those who had not been trained to use participatory teaching approaches. As one teacher in Lao People's Democratic Republic commented:

'The training on integrating sex education was good, and there were various activities that teachers could use with their integrated lessons. Firstly, there was an activity before starting class to boost students' brains, and to make them want to learn in the forms of role play, singing, or games. When it reaches the middle of the lesson, the students would feel tired and not concentrate on the lesson, then we will have a refreshing activity like games or singing.'

Teachers also reported gaps in training. In Namibia and Lagos State, some reported that it had been more than a decade since they had had refresher training. For example, one teacher in Lagos State indicated that training had stagnated since the introduction of the FLHE programme in 2005 and that neither she nor her colleagues had received any training since then. She described recent training efforts as less intensive, robust and engaging. In Lao People's Democratic Republic, teachers indicated that they needed more support for tailoring CSE content for lower and upper secondary school learners, given their different capacities and needs. In several countries, educators suggested that training on CSE should go beyond teachers who are delivering CSE lessons, as otherwise the messages in CSE lessons could be 'undone' by teachers who were not familiar with the aims or content of the curriculum.

Teaching and learning methods

Although specific guidance on teaching methods was difficult to find, teachers were enthusiastic about their use of participatory teaching and learning methods, such as role play, debate and theatre. They also reported using diverse pedagogical approaches for CSE, in contrast to the didactic approaches used to teach other subjects.

Some teachers suggested that teaching CSE had improved their ability to understand and communicate with adolescents. For example, a teacher in Namibia said that:

‘It [teaching] has even improved my communication skills towards the learners. You know you are dealing with adolescents, and obviously, you are learning through how other colleagues do things. You will know how to handle these manners [of relating to adolescents].’

Feedback from learners was largely aligned with educators’ reporting that CSE was delivered through participatory and engaging approaches. In general, learners viewed CSE teaching positively compared with other subjects, largely because of its participatory nature. Very high proportions of survey respondents agreed that CSE was fun and interactive. Some also saw it as

a safe space for asking questions, equal participation and respectful disagreement. In focus groups, learners reported that using real life examples in class helped to make CSE relatable. For some, this also contributed to positive views of CSE teachers. One learner in Armenia commented:

‘We would like to have all lessons like this one; we talk with teachers, we have the feeling that our opinions matter’. Another, in Namibia, said: ‘When it is about relationships, the class becomes active and wants to talk about that but when it comes to other topics the whole class is quiet’.

However, this view was not unanimous. Some focus group participants recalled learning about some CSE topics that relied on teacher lectures and learner note-taking, suggesting that implementation was not aligned with programme design.

Key findings

- Each of the five CSE programmes reflected a unique combination of design features, including the extent to which CSE is integrated into carrier subjects or taught as a stand-alone subject and the balance between classroom teachers and outside providers in programme delivery.
- While all programmes included objectives and content related to promoting healthy relationships, the breadth and depth of information covered varied. Specific directives on what teachers are required to teach in class also differed, with some countries providing detailed guidelines, while others did not.
- Although all programmes included guidance on pre-service and in-service training for CSE teachers, this training is not consistently available and teachers highlighted the need for regular updates of their knowledge and skills.
- Time constraints and prioritization of examinable subjects by educators and learners were identified as challenges to effective CSE delivery. Despite school-level administrative support for CSE, there was pressure to prioritize examinable subjects and topics when allocating resources and time in the school timetable.
- Interactive teaching methods were integral to CSE programme design and delivery. Teachers and learners reported that they value and enjoy participatory teaching and learning approaches.

School social environments



Relevant research questions

RQ2.1 How do learners and educators describe the general school social environment?

RQ2.2 What practices are typical among school personnel, including teaching and learning, and discipline?

RQ2.6 How do educators and learners describe the relationship between elements of the broader school environment, healthy relationships programming, and their implications for achieving intended healthy relationship outcomes?

The school social environment reflects the ways that school policies, educators and learners alike contribute to norms within the school environment and determine the dynamics of the relationships between them.

The school social environment is also a setting where learners may apply learning about healthy relationships to their relationships with adults and their peers. Findings from learner surveys and focus groups and educator interviews showed generally positive environments in all of the school sites across the five countries. However, they also highlighted school policies and practices, and social dynamics, that were counter to or had negative implications for application of CSE values and learning.

Educator-learner relationships

Across schools and countries, educators and learners described school dynamics as broadly positive. Teachers and administrators shared a belief that school personnel promote the best interests of all learners and are supportive of learners' diverse needs. Most learners participating in the survey reported having at least one trusted adult in the school environment in whom they could confide, although the proportion ranged from 60% to 80% across the five countries. Many learners in focus groups also expressed comfort with sharing their personal problems with teachers and reaching out to trusted adults in the school for support and counselling. In Lagos State, for example, some learners likened the learner-teacher relationship to one between a child and a parent, a sentiment that educators echoed. Learners also placed high value on fair treatment by

educators. In Armenia, learners praised their teachers for treating all learners equally and at the same time still recognizing each learner's individual needs. Some learners felt that sexuality education teachers cultivated safe environments, and they described being able to speak openly about their lives to teachers during CSE lessons. Although trust-based, reliable relationships between learners and educators was not a learning objective of any of the CSE programmes, participants' perspectives commonly viewed this as an outcome of CSE.

Positive feedback was not unanimous. Some learners reported negative experiences with and distrust of some teachers and administrators. Learners expressed frustration with administrators and teachers who failed to manage negative peer dynamics. While it was not possible to determine the frequency of negative educator practices, learners in nearly all study schools provided examples of teachers who unfairly or harshly applied discipline, failed to stop peer-to-peer bullying and harassment, and practised favouritism.

Some learners also said that they were reluctant to share their problems with teachers because of concerns about confidentiality. In some contexts, this fear was based on personal experience of breaches of confidentiality, while in others it was expressed as a generational divide, with learners expecting that personal information will be shared with other adults. These concerns undermined learners' trust in CSE teachers, making them hesitant to share personal experiences and reducing their confidence in the content delivered. As a learner in Lao People's Democratic Republic said:

‘We cannot discuss with [teachers]; they will talk about that in another classroom. That is a true story. If you have talked with teachers on the first floor, students from the second floor also know about this. If there are 10 classrooms, all will know about the discussed issues. Even the school shop owner will know.’

Trust in teachers is also undermined by disciplinary practices. Learners in three of the five contexts gave examples of teachers using corporal punishment and shaming in the classroom. In Namibia and Lagos State, learners reported the use of corporal punishment by teachers. Learners in Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Lagos State reported being publicly shamed in front of their peers when they misbehaved. Learners in one school in Lao People’s Democratic Republic spoke of having to do a ‘fashion walk’ in front of the class if they were late, while in the other school, learners reported that teachers had used social media to publicize learners’ misdeeds. One learner in Namibia said:

‘Let me say a learner is standing outside, instead of telling the child to come in, you will find that one teacher will pinch the child, hit the child, or beat the child with a pipe to get inside. I also understand where it comes from. Teachers get tired of repeating themselves.’

Learner-learner relationships

Learners in all contexts recognized respect and kindness as values that schools promoted through written or unwritten rules and behavioural expectations from educators. Many described educators as sending clear messages that bullying, teasing and harassment were unacceptable behaviours. This was consistent with the CSE programmes in all five contexts, which included content on issues such as respect and communication. However, translation of these values into the school social environment varied, and depended on teachers’ ability to manage peer dynamics.

Survey responses indicated that peer relationships were broadly respectful and cooperative, although the extent of positive responses varied. For example, most survey participants in Lao People’s Democratic Republic (91%) and Armenia (82%) agreed that boys and girls treat each other with respect, but fewer participants in Lagos State (68%) and Buenos Aires Province (55%) agreed with this. In focus groups in Lagos State, learners recalled examples of girls experiencing sexual harassment from

boys, particularly as girls enter puberty. Female focus group participants in Namibia reported more negative experiences than male participants, describing instances of bullying, teasing and unhealthy levels of competition with other girls. Similarly, while most survey respondents in all five contexts agreed that ‘learners with disabilities are treated well’, a significant minority in some study schools did not agree.

Feedback from participants in focus groups also highlighted differences between schools within countries. For example, in Lao People’s Democratic Republic, learners in the more ethnically diverse, rural school, described harmonious peer relationships in their school – ‘the school environment is good. I have many friends and we have fun’ – but those in the peri-urban school indicated that bullying, teasing, and physical fighting ‘happen all the time’.

While feedback from focus groups in some contexts suggested that respectful relationships between peers are not always guaranteed, gender diverse participants in focus groups in Buenos Aires Province mostly agreed that the school environment was safe for those with gender diverse and transgender identities. This was a dynamic that some learners credited to the school environment. For example:

‘At school, a lot of room is given to the voice of the kids. It’s pretty open to everything. There were a lot of kids here who maybe wanted to transition, and they went to this school because in other schools they are not heard.’

Although not an explicit focus of the study, learners in Buenos Aires Province, Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Namibia provided examples of how certain behaviours on social media exacerbated tensions between learners, with cyberbullying spilling over into bullying in schools. In Buenos Aires Province, learners reported social media accounts being created to spread gossip. In Namibia, girls mentioned that social media gossip discouraged them from attending school. Learners in the peri-urban school in Lao People’s Democratic Republic gave examples of how their peers used social media to spy on one another’s behaviour, sometimes at the behest of teachers, representing a breach of trust by peers and teachers.

Key findings

- Across countries and schools, educators and learners described school social environments as positive and conducive to learning, with many learners identifying at least one trusted adult in school. However, this was not universal, and qualitative data highlighted difficulties and negative dynamics in educator-learner and learner-learner relationships.
- While learners are broadly positive about relationships with teachers, some reported examples of behaviour that undermines their trust and confidence in CSE teachers including discrimination and favouritism, harsh punishment, humiliation and shaming, and breaches of confidentiality.
- Peer relationships were generally viewed as supportive and respectful, but negative examples, including bullying, harassment and use of social media in cyberbullying and spreading gossip were also reported.
- Educators credited CSE programming with promoting messages around gender equality, respect for ethnic or religious differences, and preventing bullying and fighting.
- Learners recognized educators' role in managing peer dynamics, but some reported that this is inconsistent and provided examples of situations where administrators and teachers had failed to intervene.



Relationship findings

The following sections present findings related to how CSE programmes in the study schools were contributing to learners' knowledge, skills and preparedness to navigate healthy relationships with parents, peers and romantic partners.



Relevant research questions

- RQ1.1** To what extent are learners aware that they receive 'healthy relationships' content through the CSE programme, and what knowledge and skills do they recall learning?
- RQ1.2** What do educators consider part of 'healthy relationships' learning, and recall teaching through the CSE programme?
- RQ1.3** How prepared do learners feel to apply the knowledge and skills in the context of relationships with parents, peers and present or future romantic partners?
- RQ1.4** What, if any, shifts in dynamics of learners' relationships with parents, peers and romantic partners do learners and educators attribute to CSE programming?
- RQ1.5** What healthy relationships-related content would learners like to be included in the CSE programme?

Drawing on analysis of curricular materials and survey, focus group and interview data, the study highlighted some commonality in the way that relationships content was covered across contexts. Open communication and respect were among the features of a healthy parent-child relationship addressed in multiple curricula and in teaching practice. Family violence was highlighted with regard to unhealthy relationships but was not covered comprehensively in any of the study contexts. Topics related to healthy relationships with peers included understanding and respecting differences, and gender equality; common unhealthy relationships topics included recognizing and resisting

peer pressure. Romantic relationships content tended to emphasize avoiding harmful or unhealthy – often gender inequitable – dynamics. Features of healthy romantic relationships were less clearly articulated.

Data from learners, teachers and administrators provided insights on what was being delivered in practice, what learners were receiving, and how they interpreted and responded to this content. And, despite the diversity of the country and programme contexts, the findings show a range of healthy relationships-related effects across all three types of relationships.

Parent-child relationships

Learners wanted close relationships with parents

Findings on parent-child relationships identified common concerns among learners across the five contexts. Learners expressed high levels of desire to improve communication with their parents and to have deep and meaningful relationships with them. They also expressed frustration with their inability to communicate effectively with their parents, which they attributed to parents' strictness and unwillingness to listen to adolescents, and generational differences. As one learner in Lagos State said:

'My daddy, he's very strict. Even though I want to ask something ... I can't. I will have to tell my mummy "mummy please help me to ask my daddy this thing" ... He doesn't understand, maybe because I'm a girl'. In several contexts, learners described the importance that parents give to educational achievement as leading to restrictions on their time and freedom.

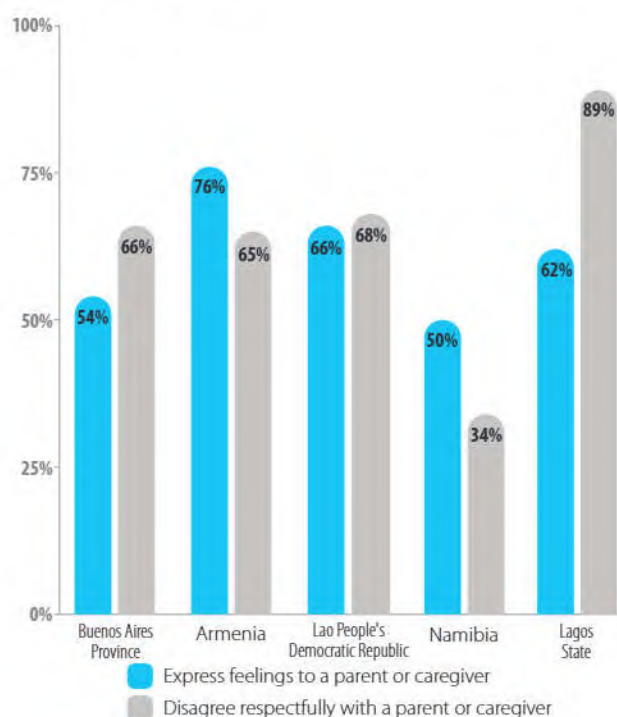
CSE programmes prepared learners to communicate with parents

Learners reported that CSE programmes had provided learning on issues that they found challenging in their relationships with parents, which had helped to prepare them to handle difficult situations. In all five contexts, most survey respondents credited the knowledge and skills acquired from CSE for improving the quality of

communication with their parents. This ranged from 61.1% in Buenos Aires Province to 91% in Lagos State. In some schools, teachers confirmed this effect, saying that parents had mentioned changes in their children's ability to express opinions respectfully at home.

Figure 1. Learners' relationships with parents

Learners who responded 'Very prepared' or 'Somewhat prepared' when asked how well prepared they felt after their CSE programme to:



Source: Data collected by the authors for the present study, 2026

CSE appears to have developed learners' empathy for their parents' concerns, and the improvements in communication identified by learners were often the result of a deeper appreciation of their parents' perspectives or gaining the ability to see situations through their parents' eyes. In Armenia, the healthy lifestyles curriculum explores mutual trust, respect and how to promote harmonious relationships in the family. One learner described how, thanks to the programme: 'I understand the fears of my parents now. I do not react to everything, and I understand their perspectives'. During a focus group discussion in Lao People's Democratic Republic of a scenario exploring how to navigate conflict with parents about mobile phone access, one learner said: *'Tell [learners] to talk openly with their parents, and tell their parents about their feelings now. The parents also should not be too strict; too strict would make the child break the rules'.*

Learners felt that by showing empathy for their parents' point of view, parents would be more likely to reciprocate, demonstrating an understanding of the importance of two-way communication. For example, learners in Buenos Aires Province discussed how the ESI programme's cross-cutting focus on respect and listening to others' opinions contributed to two-way communication between learners and their parents. Several learners described changes in parents' and grandparents' attitudes toward gender and sexuality as a result of having more open conversations about what they were learning in ESI. One said: *'And my mom started to be interested in these topics, she loves to learn and learns a lot from me and my sister. And you also notice there's a change and mom, little by little, is modernizing. Because her family is also very sexist and...I already see a change and we are also learning together.'*

Generational divides presented challenges for learners

Some learners identified barriers that made it difficult to translate CSE learning into more open, two-way communication with parents. For learners in Namibia, Lagos State and Lao People's Democratic Republic in particular, this included traditional norms about parent-child relationships, for example, the belief that children should always obey their parents. Learners also reported that educators reinforced norms around respect and obedience towards parents. One learner in Namibia said: *'Some educators advise learners not to challenge their parents and just do as they are told'.*

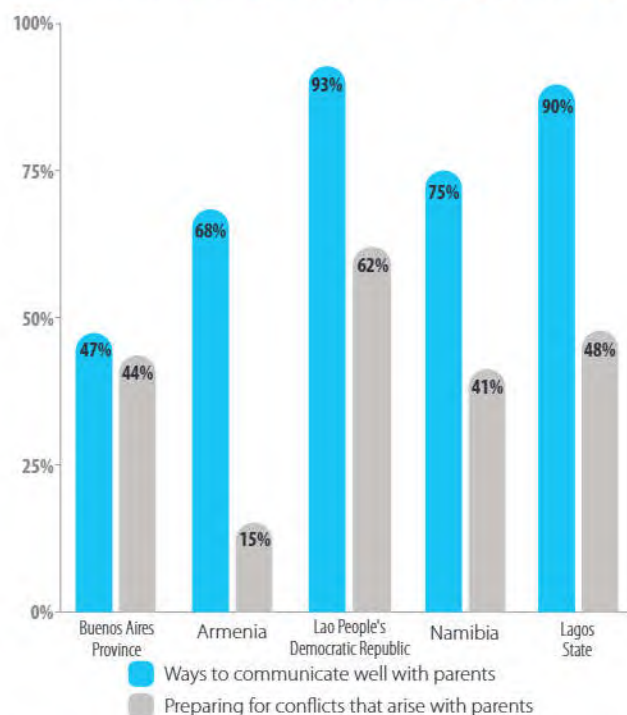
However, learners and educators were in agreement that greater parental involvement in CSE would enhance outcomes related to parent-child communication. For example, in Lagos State, learners suggested that parents could be engaged through Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and that CSE content could be shared with parents through this platform.

Curricula prioritized knowledge over skills building

In relation to parent-child relationships, learners described curricula as focusing more on imparting knowledge than on developing skills to handle challenging situations. In addition, content on family violence did not build comprehensive knowledge and skills.

Most survey participants in the study countries, with the exception of Buenos Aires Province, recalled learning about different ways to communicate well with parents as part of the CSE programme. However, as Table 7 shows, fewer recalled learning about how to prepare for conflict with parents, indicating that there is less focus on the practical skills learners need.

Figure 2. Learner recall on CSE topics related to communication with parents, by country



Source: Data collected by the authors for the present study, 2026

Programmes had limited content on family violence

Topics related to violence in the family were not covered comprehensively in the curricula of any of the five contexts. In Lagos State, 'violence' appears in a long list of 'family problems' that require adolescents to seek help. In Armenia, the topic 'prevention of family violence' is included without any detail as to what will be taught. Namibia's curriculum makes a generic reference to 'relationships and violence' but does not provide specific information on violence in the family. In Lao People's Democratic Republic, there was very limited discussion of family violence in the curriculum. Buenos Aires Province's curriculum addresses violence as an expression of masculinity, but does not explicitly address how it manifests in the family.

In all contexts, except Armenia, most learners responding to the survey recalled learning about violence in the

family. In Armenia, only 43% of the Grade 9 survey participants recalled learning about family violence, but this was not surprising as family violence is a topic delivered in the Grade 10 curriculum. However, the proportion of learners who reported that they felt prepared to identify violence in the family was far lower in all five contexts.

Topics related to family violence were not included in the focus group question guide, nor did they come up during discussion of parent-child relationships. It is not clear whether this is because learners have difficulty in identifying what constitutes violence within the family, are not experiencing violence or are unwilling to discuss it because of taboos around speaking openly about family violence. Regardless, the absence of curriculum content focusing on building skills related to family violence is consistent with findings highlighting gaps in applying learning to other aspects of parent-child relationships.

Key findings

- Adolescents have a strong desire to connect with their parents and other caregivers. CSE contributes to their understanding of the characteristics of healthy relationships between parents and their children, including respect, open communication and empathy.
- Learners credited CSE with improving their communication with parents, due to their increased ability to empathize with parents' perspectives and to communicate their own perspectives respectfully.
- Communication between adolescents and parents is challenging when adolescents feel that their parents do not value or listen to their perspectives. They expressed a desire for parents to improve their own communication skills.
- CSE curriculum content on family violence was present, but was often generic and lacking clear definitions or lessons, and topics were not covered comprehensively in any of the study countries.
- Learners require more opportunities to practise applying their knowledge and skills in real-life scenarios during CSE lessons, particularly in relation to conflict resolution.

Peer relationships

Learners felt prepared to choose healthy friendships

Across all five countries, most survey participants reported having learned about healthy and unhealthy friendship dynamics. This knowledge had enabled them to make better choices about friends and to identify healthy and unhealthy peer relationships.

In focus groups, learners in Buenos Aires Province, Armenia, Namibia and Lagos State discussed how CSE had influenced their understanding of how to choose friends, with mostly positive reflections on seeking healthy relationships that enhance their lives. For example, in Namibia, one learner said: *'[LSHE] taught us how to be cautious, before we run with everyone ... we try to look at specific characteristics in others before they become friends'.*

In Buenos Aires Province, learners in both schools agreed that there were changes in peer relationships, citing numerous ways that the quality of relationships had improved. In their own lives, several reported being better able to identify healthy and unhealthy peer relationships. Specifically, they shared their enhanced understanding of how to recognize and change situations of dependency or submission within friendships. For example, one learner said: *'I learned to respect myself and keep my distance even though I loved her a lot, the ESI taught me a lot about that'.*

In Lagos State, the curriculum is intended to balance content on both the importance of friendship as a positive contribution to learners' lives and avoiding negative peer pressure. However, learners' awareness of peer relationships focused mainly on the latter and they expressed a desire to learn more about building and maintaining positive peer relationships. As one learner said: *'I would like to learn mostly about the relationship with friends in school ... We should value our friends in school more ... and we should show them support'.*

Learners developed greater empathy for others

In focus groups in all five contexts, learners provided examples of how they felt better able to express empathy towards friends and peers as a result of CSE lessons.

They credited positive changes in their empathy to learning about diversity; in some contexts, these changes were also observed at the school level.

In Armenia, greater understanding among peers and friends led to noticeable improvements in the quality of friendships. One learner said: *'We openly discussed these [CSE] topics, and we became more confident. We understand our friends better and have become closer to each other'.* Another learner echoed this, saying: *'I think we understand now what is happening with us. We have become freer, better friends'.*

Learners from Namibia described the increased respect that they have for peers and friends in terms of the 'golden rule': *'Life skills has taught me to treat other people the way I want to be treated'.* When prompted for an example of how empathy is expressed towards peers who experience ridicule, one learner shared this example: *'Last year in our class there was a problem whereby this other girl was smelling in her armpits so then my classmates were making fun of her and calling her names. Then when she comes in the class, they would laugh at her, so I decided to approach her and tell her in a polite and nice way that she is smelling or if she forgot to put on roll on and she told me thank you for being nice'.*

Learners in some contexts also reported examples of how greater empathy and understanding had challenged gender stereotypes and had enabled them to start friendships with peers of the opposite sex without it being considered romantic. A learner in Namibia explained this:

'People know we can talk and can hang out as boys and girls as friends. Life skills have made it possible and how to be comfortable with the opposite sex'.

The ESI curriculum in Buenos Aires Province emphasises respect for all people, regardless of gender, culture, beliefs or social origins, and this had led learners to question gender stereotypes in the school environment in a way that created greater respect and inclusion. Several mentioned questioning homophobia and support for peers' gender transition. An educator in Buenos Aires Province commented on how these values have transformed the school environment: *'For example, here, there were spring festivals where, when I started, 15 or 16 years ago, they paraded in 'butterfly' [a discriminatory term for a gay man] costumes, and now that is impossible. It's unthinkable. It is impossible for it to happen because*

the same kids tell you “No, that’s humiliating, this is discriminatory, that is not done, we cannot be mocking or laughing at someone who dresses differently” and from a young age it comes out.’

In Lao People’s Democratic Republic, educators in the rural school reported changes at the school level, particularly in relationships between learners from different ethnic groups. One educator observed that there was more integration and inclusion amongst learners when they play sports, which she attributed in part to CSE learning about the harms of stigma and discrimination: *‘They played with only their [same] ethnic friends. But now they play with friends from other ethnic groups such as playing football and kick-volleyball. In the past, members of the kick-volleyball team were only [one group]. Now they are mixed.’*

Learners did not feel prepared to address violence

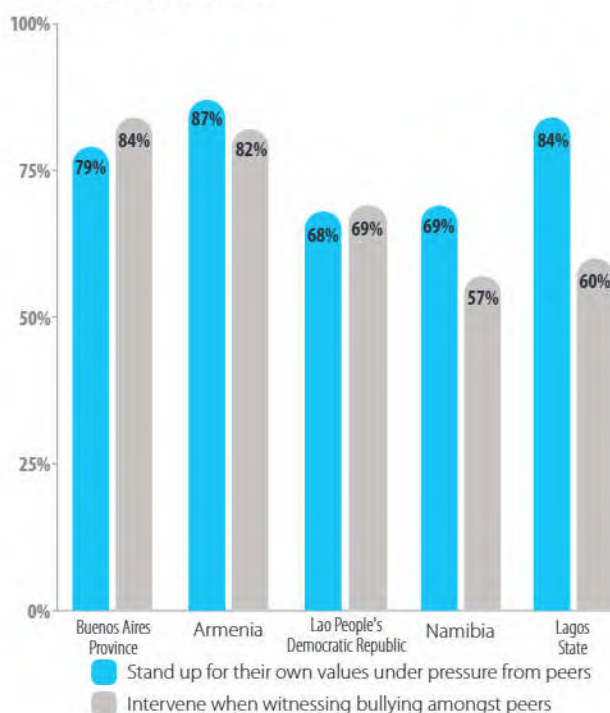
When asked whether they felt prepared to intervene when witnessing bullying, most survey participants indicated that they were, although this ranged from 57% to 87% across the study countries. However, in focus groups, learners shared their concerns about intervening in situations they have encountered in and outside of the school environment. In all five contexts, learners expressed difficulties in applying their knowledge, values and skills in certain situations and, while the examples given varied between contexts, many related to preparedness to intervene or address violence, including bullying and cyberbullying.

Given the prevalence of violence in the school social environment and in the online environment, learners considered it important to know how to respond. In Namibia, learners identified examples of cyberbullying and spreading rumours through social media platforms,

but when asked how they would address these situations, they could not identify effective solutions and most suggested avoiding social media entirely. As one said: ‘I will advise the girl to abstain from social media and be strong.’ When asked about addressing bullying, another learner responded: *‘Bullying, if someone is being attacked, I do not get involved, I mind my own business.’* In Buenos Aires Province as well, cyberbullying was identified as a common issue, with online accounts created by learners to gossip about others, but learners offered few examples of when they or others had intervened.

Figure 3. Learners’ relationships with peers

Learners who responded ‘Very prepared’ or ‘Somewhat prepared’ when asked how well prepared they felt after their CSE programme to:



Source: UNESCO, 2026. Data collected by the authors for the present study.

Key findings

- Learners in all five countries felt prepared to identify healthy and unhealthy peer dynamics, including peer pressure, and some attributed this to CSE learning.
- Learners attributed higher levels of empathy for their peers and friends to learning about diversity and friendship in CSE lessons. Educators also observed increased empathy and acceptance at the school level.
- Despite recognizing harmful dynamics, learners did not feel prepared to navigate violence, including bullying and cyberbullying, in peer relationships.

Romantic relationships

CSE content on romantic relationships focuses on risks

Most learners responding to the survey reported having been in a romantic relationship, with the exception of Armenia where learners participating in the study were younger. Despite this, in all contexts except Buenos Aires Province, the curricular content included very little on topics that characterize healthy romantic relationships such as partnership or shared-decision-making.

Instead, lessons focused on the risks of sexual relationships, especially for girls, and teachers emphasized messages about abstinence, delaying relationships and prioritizing education. For example, in Namibia, topics related to romantic and sexual relationships included abusive relationships, sexual abstinence, identifying pressure to have sexual intercourse, and personal values. In Lagos State's FLHE curriculum, the topic of abstinence largely highlights harmful reasons for choosing to have sex, such as being pressured or drunk. Only Buenos Aires Province's curriculum had content on the physical and emotional nature of sexual relationships, including concepts such as expression of desires and needs, knowledge and acceptance of the rules that protect physical and mental integrity in emotional and sexual relationships, and recognition of and reflection on behaviours that might impose on others' rights.

In focus groups, learners described lessons about resisting pressure from peers to have a relationship or refusing unwanted advances as useful, but also commented that the content of CSE on romantic relationships did not always reflect their reality.

Teachers in all five contexts reflected on how their personal views shaped the way that they delivered CSE content on romantic and sexual relationships. Mostly, their views were aligned with the risk-focused and abstinence messaging of the curriculum. Teachers in Namibia and Lagos State maintained a consistent abstinence-only message when talking to learners about sexual relationships that typically extended to all romantic relationships. In Namibia, content on romantic relationships was largely absent. In Lagos State educators' and administrators' messages emphasized delaying and avoiding romantic relationships because of their potential

for risk, particularly for girls. An administrator in Lagos State reported that the school discourages any discussion of sexuality, including around consent, while a teacher said that it was inappropriate to talk about gendered power dynamics in relationships because:

'These ones are too small for romantic relationships, we don't balance power here... most of them are between the ages of 10 and 15. For now we just tell them that they should just be friends, definitely there will be sexual attraction of course, in as much as they have gotten to the stage of puberty, things like that are expected, but we intend to let them know that there is time for everything, but now is not time to be in any form of romantic relationship.'

However, some teachers saw the need to go beyond the curriculum to address the realities of adolescents' lives. For example, two teachers in Lao People's Democratic Republic said that they recognized that adolescents engage in romantic and sexual relationships and sought opportunities to help them do so as safely as possible. They felt they had a responsibility to prepare learners with accurate information about how to protect themselves from pregnancy and STIs. As one said:

'We would express that if [they think] it is necessary to have sex, then they need to protect themselves at the beginning... from pregnancy at an early age, and more important... from infectious diseases... How sure are you to get engaged in sex with them? Are you sure that they will get married to you after this? What if they don't? What would you do? These are what we advise them.'

Educators in Buenos Aires Province also appeared to be accepting of learners engaging in romantic or sexual relationships and saw their role, and the ESI programme, as contributing to positive changes in the quality of relationships. This included learners' ability to critically assess gender norms and expectations concerning romantic relationships. Educators also suggested that the programme could be improved by placing more focus on how to navigate challenging situations in romantic relationships, such as possessive and controlling behaviours, jealousy and conflict.

Learners felt better prepared to navigate gender dynamics in romantic relationships

CSE curricula in Armenia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Namibia and Lagos State include limited discussion of issues that can influence romantic relationships such as gender norms and stereotypes. Despite this, survey data indicates that most learners had learned about topics such as the influence of gender on romantic relationships and sexual consent, including how to say 'no' if they were not ready or willing to have sex.

The extent to which learners felt prepared to navigate gendered dynamics in romantic relationships varied. While some learners provided examples of instances where their knowledge had helped them to do this, others highlighted the need for CSE programmes to focus more on relevant skills that they need.

In Buenos Aires Province, the curriculum emphasizes critical thinking about gender norms and expectations in relationships. Some learners reported feeling more confident to challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes and to identify what they find pleasurable in sexual relationships. As one said: 'ESI helped me a lot to learn about the body and what I like, and not just give pleasure to the other person, more than anything in heterosexual relationships, I learned not to be submerged in the power of men'.

Learners in Buenos Aires Province also highlighted learning and skills around mutual decision making and consent. The majority (82%) of survey respondents reported feeling prepared to make important decisions with a romantic partner. Focus group participants identified ways in which CSE had illuminated the dimensions of controlling behaviours that they found to be highly relevant. One learner provided an example: 'There is something that really shocked me, which was that one day we were learning the circle of violence... And it reminded me a lot of a relationship that a friend of mine is in... I immediately went and mentioned it to my friend as if to say: "Hey, it seems to me that you are going through an abusive relationship"... And the friend was like... she realized it, but at the same time she wanted to continue with that relationship'.

In Namibia, gender equality and girls' empowerment were a focus of relationships content in general. However, in content related to romantic relationships, the emphasis was on risk and, in particular, coercion around sex. Messages reinforced the idea that girls are responsible for mitigating risks. Some of this messaging was welcome.

Many female focus group participants described their increased confidence and empowerment in romantic relationships as a result of LSHE. One commented: '[Girls] can speak up if they want to be in a relationship or not'. Another added: 'Girls have courage not to be touched, kissed and they can refuse to have sex'. In addition, boys in focus group discussions spoke about the importance of resisting pressure from male friends to have sex. However, messages reinforced the idea that it is girls' responsibility to avoid risky situations and resist coercion, rather than promoting a more holistic and equal approach to consent and communication.

Girls in Lao People's Democratic Republic shared how impactful it had been to learn about the importance of completing education before marriage and not feeling pressured into marriage at a young age. Learners in Lao People's Democratic Republic also articulated their preparedness to identify unhealthy gendered dynamics, such as a boyfriend trying to control his girlfriend. When asked to describe how they will know when a romantic relationship is healthy, a male learner offered an example – 'They will not keep texting us when we are out' – presumably as this indicates a level of trust between partners.

In Armenia, learners expressed views suggesting awareness of the pressures around having a relationship. As one said: 'It is so sad that our society thinks that when you talk to boys, you are in love. They should understand that talking, walking and playing with boys and girls is part of normal relations'.

Learners demonstrated confidence in ending unhealthy relationships

Participants in several contexts, particularly girls, described how CSE programmes had contributed to their confidence to avoid or end unhealthy relationships. This sense of empowerment took different forms but was built on social and emotional learning, including self-esteem, confidence, respect, negotiation and communication, as well as knowledge of the characteristics of healthy relationships.

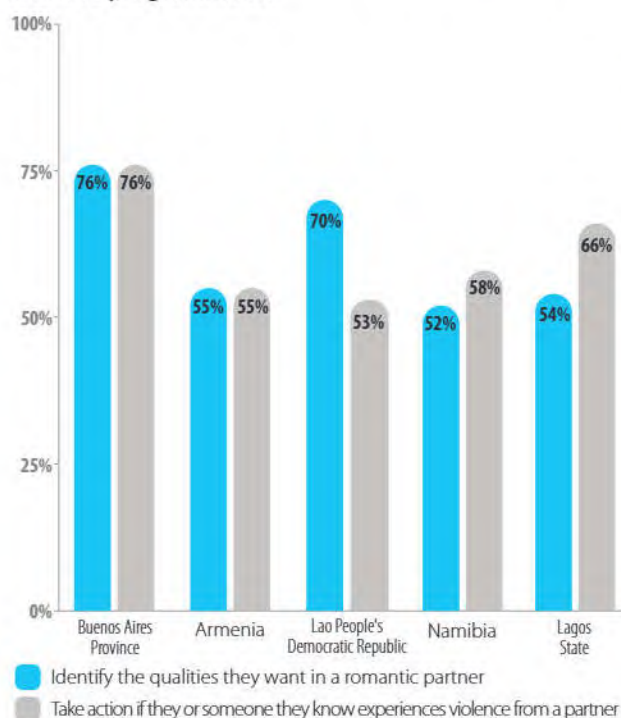
In Buenos Aires Province, learners credited lessons on gender equality and respect with building their confidence to avoid negative relationship dynamics. As one said: 'ESI taught me to know how to let go of people, live without fear and respect myself'. In focus groups, several learners reported feeling more equipped to make decisions and pursue relationships on their own terms. Educators validated learners' perspectives, observing that learners seemed better able to resist

stereotypical gender dynamics in forming relationships. However, only 17.5% of survey participants agreed that it would be easy to find a respectful partner.

Girls and boys in Namibia credited LSHE for equipping them to resist peer pressure to have a boyfriend or girlfriend. They recalled learning about sexual pressure and refusal skills within a relationship, topics that were particularly important for female learners. In focus groups, several female learners spoke about the idea of a boyfriend pursuing sex as a 'red flag'. Others described feeling 'empowered' to end an unhealthy relationship. Girls in focus groups in Lagos State also said that they felt confident to reject romantic relationships. However, this reflected a combination of a newfound confidence in their own preferences for a romantic relationship and concern about the social risks associated with being known to have a boyfriend. When asked how they would advise a girlfriend who is being pressured to have sex by her boyfriend, they indicated that they would advise her to communicate first and break up with him if he listened more to his friends than to her: 'If it's me, that's the girl I will tell you, "aunty, better break up ooh" (aunty it is better you break up)... for the guy he should stay away from those his friends, they want to destroy his life.'

Figure 4. Learners' relationships with romantic partners

Learners who responded 'Very prepared' or 'Somewhat prepared' when asked how well prepared they felt after their CSE programme to:



Source: UNESCO, 2026. Data collected by the authors for the present study.

Romantic relationships content provides limited opportunity for building skills

In all study countries, learners wanted to learn more about romantic relationships and to develop the skills needed to navigate challenging situations. They expressed interest in teaching methods that would allow them to practise applying new knowledge and skills in safe spaces before having to confront the same situations in real romantic relationships. Many also wanted to learn about romantic relationships before they were in a relationship in order to be prepared for the future.

In Lagos State, learners highlighted the misunderstandings that can arise in romantic relationships, often due to a lack of communication. Girls described difficulties in getting boys to talk to them openly. Lack of mutual understanding was also cited as a common challenge. As one boy said: 'There is no understanding among us, we don't understand each other because there's a time when two people might be dating, so if you don't understand this one character you don't understand the other character. That... alone can separate the two of them.'

Learners in Lagos State also suggested that teachers could provide more practical guidance on, for example, navigating conflicts with partners.

Learners in Buenos Aires Province were largely positive about the contribution of ESI to their romantic relationships, but expressed a desire to learn more about the dynamics of unhealthy relationships and the types of behaviour that should not be tolerated or accepted.

Key findings

- CSE curricular content and delivery about romantic relationships focused on risks, abstinence and delaying sexual initiation in four out of the five countries. The exception was in Buenos Aires Province, where content addresses the emotional nature of sexual relationships and overarching values of boundaries, communication and respect.
- Learners in all five countries reported learning to recognize important elements of gendered power dynamics in relationships, although there is still a perception that girls are responsible for managing risk, for example, refusing sexual pressure.
- Learners felt better prepared to enter healthy relationships as a result of CSE, due to increased self-esteem and confidence, as well as being able to identify the characteristics they wanted in a partner. They also felt better prepared to recognize unhealthy dynamics in romantic relationships and to end unhealthy relationships.
- Overall, learners want to develop skills to improve communication and navigate conflict in romantic relationships and to learn about romantic relationships before they start to have such relationships.



Summary and implications

This study explored the ways in which school-based CSE programmes affect outcomes related to healthy relationships during adolescence with parents, peers and romantic partners in five countries. It contributes to addressing a gap in the existing literature, which largely focuses on determining the effectiveness of CSE by measuring outcomes related to sexual behaviour and SRH. The study findings show that not only does CSE have the potential to increase learners' knowledge of key relationships topics and to build their social and emotional skills, but that it can also improve the quality of relationships with parents, peers and romantic partners.

The implications of the study findings for CSE programme delivery and future measurement of CSE outcomes are discussed below.

CSE programme delivery

There is no blueprint for CSE programmes that will yield standardized results in all contexts, but every national programme is a source of evidence and learning. Each of the five CSE programmes studied was different in terms of the breadth and depth of curricular content, delivery and timetabling within the school curriculum, training and support for teachers, and involvement of external stakeholders.

Findings from these five countries suggest that careful attention needs to be paid to ensuring that CSE is delivered as intended and content is not deprioritized or delivered selectively due to its non-examinable status or teacher discomfort. Effective programme delivery requires allocation of space in the school timetable

for CSE, adequate resources, and well trained and supported teachers.

The findings also reinforce the importance of pedagogy in CSE outcomes. In all five countries, it was clear that learners' engagement with CSE content increases when participatory teaching and learning methods are used. Learners also reported closer relationships with educators when CSE programming integrated discussion and their perspectives and experiences were respected and taken seriously. This has implications for teacher training, which needs to go beyond the content of the curriculum to also develop the skills of teachers in the use of participatory methods.

School social environments

The study findings show that learning about healthy relationships can happen in the wider school environment, not just in the classroom, if this is supported by the ethos of the school and by all school personnel. The school environment and school personnel can reinforce values promoted by CSE programmes, such as respect, inclusivity and gender equality. In school contexts that promote these values, educators reported reductions in violence and bullying, as well as greater social cohesion in the school environment.

Conversely, the wider school environment can also undermine these values when harmful disciplinary practices are used by staff or violence, and bullying and harassment between learners are tolerated. Core values, such as the importance of respect, equality and non-violence can be integrated into broader curricula and practices to ensure that all school personnel, not just those teaching CSE, uphold them. This would promote trust between educators and learners, as well as creating a safer, more supportive environment for learners to

reinforce and apply positive values in their relationships with each other.

Although the study did not set out to learn how CSE affected relationships between educators and learners, it found that CSE has the potential both to increase learners' trust in educators and to enhance educators' understanding of and communication with learners.

Most learners indicated that they have close friends and characterized their school environment as positive, but some also described negative experiences with educators and peers. Some reported that educators had failed to intervene or take action when there is conflict between learners, while others reported that they received little support from educators to address cyberbullying and harmful use of social media. Educators' need greater awareness of how peer dynamics in the digital realm affect the school environment and how they, as trusted adults, can support learners.

Parent-child relationships

The study findings demonstrate the positive effects that CSE can have on learners' relationships with their parents. Learners felt that they were better able to understand their parents' perspectives and, as a result, felt more empathy for them. This contributed to more open and respectful communication, including in situations where parents and children have different perspectives. The study did not include parents and so was unable to determine whether or not they observed the same improvements, although anecdotal feedback from teachers suggested that some parents had noted changes. Exploring parents' perspectives concerning the effects of CSE on their relationships with their children is an area for future research.

The findings also illustrate the limitations of only addressing parent-child relationships from one side. Learners expressed frustration when their attempts to improve communication were not reciprocated by parents. Traditional hierarchies between parents and

children persist and related norms, such as obedience and respect for parents are sometimes reinforced in the classroom by sexuality education teachers. Adolescents need to feel heard in their relationships with parents and to develop the skills that allow them to express their opinions, desires and needs in effective ways. CSE programmes, as well as community development and social programmes, should be inclusive of parents and help them to develop skills to communicate with their children.

Curricular analysis and feedback from learners showed that CSE content does not address family violence comprehensively. And the finding that CSE lessons often prioritize knowledge over skills development highlights an important gap in preparing learners to navigate conflict and violence within the family.

Peer relationships

The study's findings show that CSE has prepared learners to distinguish healthy and unhealthy relationships and that learning about diversity, rights, equality and anti-discrimination can enhance learners' understanding of and empathy for their peers. The findings also highlight the potential of a more intentional focus in CSE on cultivating healthy relationships with friends and peers. This would mark a shift from the current focus on the negative influence of peers. In addition, skills-based social and emotional learning, including topics such as empathy and boundary-setting, should be strengthened in CSE curricula to foster healthier peer relationships.

Across the study sites, it was clear that learners felt unprepared to navigate situations with peers in the physical and virtual worlds including conflict. In their view, educators too often dismiss their concerns about conflict, violence, cyberbullying and online harassment through social media, even though these adversely affect the school environment and overall learning. Educators need sensitization and training to address these issues and to support learners to do so.

Romantic relationships

The study findings suggest that learning about romantic relationships has an overwhelming focus on risk and harm. This is reinforced by norms that emphasize abstinence or delaying sexual relationships. Navigating personal beliefs and perceived obligations to discourage romantic attachment and the fact that some adolescents do engage in romantic relationships is a challenge for educators. Teachers need opportunities to reflect on and clarify their own values as well as guidance on how to approach the topic of romantic relationships in a way that meets learners' needs for relevant information and skills and reflects the realities of their lives.

CSE programmes in the study countries provided some space for learners to explore gendered dynamics in romantic relationships, although they varied in depth and relevance to learners' lives. Learners recalled learning skills to say 'no' to sex if it is unwanted and to leave unhealthy relationships. Some also reported that they felt prepared to question gendered dynamics within and around relationships, including peer pressure on boys. Further strengthening learners' capacity to consider gender dynamics when selecting and engaging with romantic partners will be crucial for CSE programmes going forward. Social and emotional learning should also continue to build learners' self-esteem and confidence to enable them to set boundaries in romantic relationships.



Towards a framework for measuring healthy relationships outcomes of CSE

Many frameworks exist for measuring the effectiveness of CSE, but these focus disproportionately on sexual behaviour and SRH outcomes. This study provided an exciting opportunity to measure and understand the contribution of CSE to outcomes associated with healthy relationships.

The framework below was developed in order to identify the full range of potential ways in which CSE might affect healthy relationship outcomes. It was developed over a 1.5-year timeframe that coincided with the study. A first draft was developed after reviewing the curricular documents of the five countries and the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (ITGSE) learning objectives for healthy relationships. This was used to inform the study design and to inform discussion of the study findings by the research team, UNESCO and the RAG. The version that appears below was discussed and validated with a group of experts during a mini research symposium hosted by UNESCO in October 2024.

The framework is not intended to provide a blueprint for developing CSE measurement frameworks. Rather than prescribing specific measurements that apply in every country context, it is intended to provide inspiration to national CSE programme stakeholders and a 'menu' of indicators from which they can select those that are

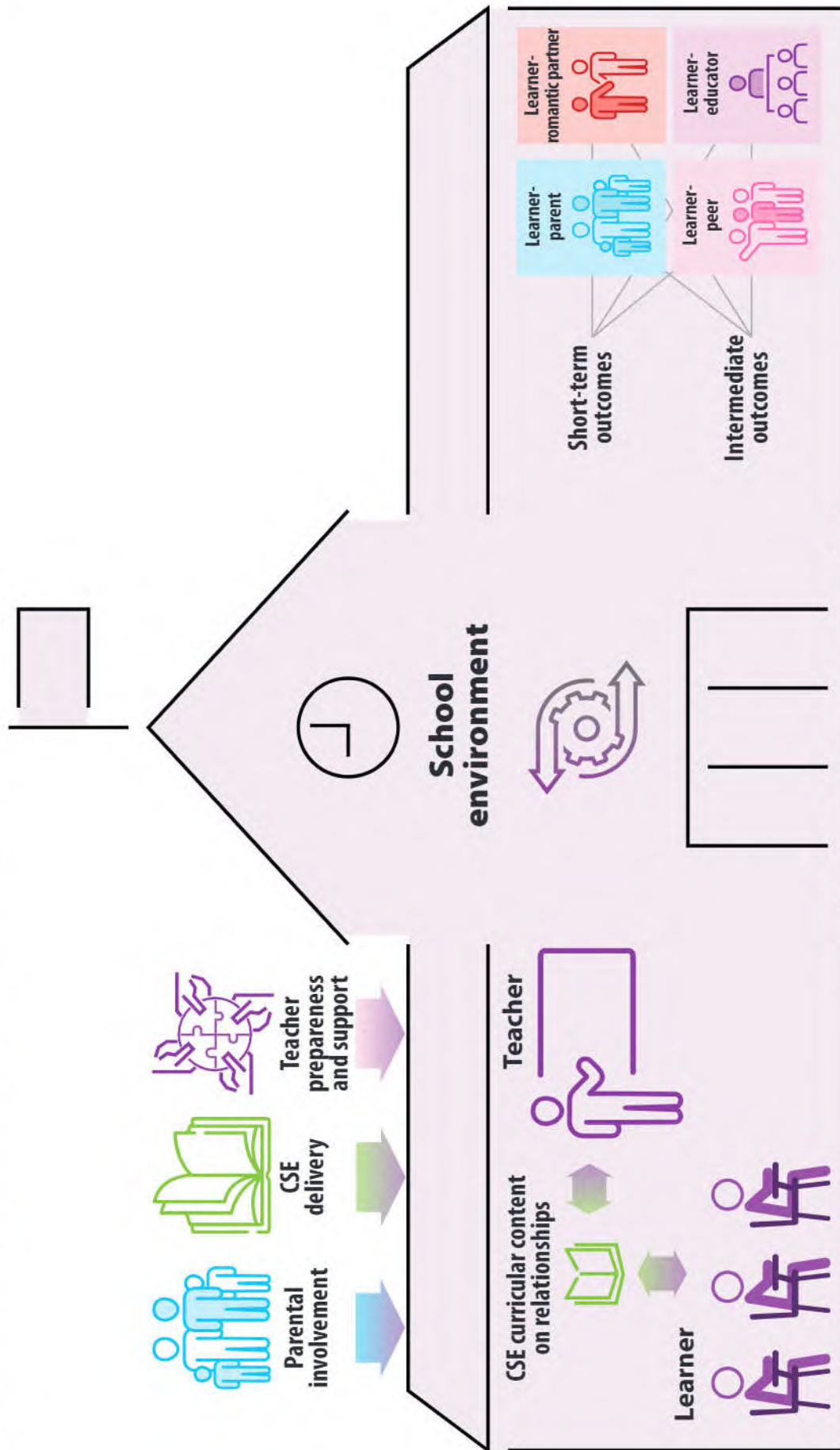
relevant to the design and content of their respective programmes.

The programmatic inputs include creating a supportive teaching and learning environment inside and outside of the classroom, alongside the content in the curricula that develops healthy relationships-related knowledge and skills. The outcomes are short-term and intermediate-term (see definitions in Glossary) for learners' relationships, educators, and the school environment.

The framework focuses on interpersonal relationships with parents, peers and romantic partners. However, study findings highlighted the importance of learners developing self-awareness and an understanding of their 'place' in relation to others in their lives. These topics were explored indirectly in the study and, as such, are situated 'outside' of the linear modules in the framework.

The framework has some limitations. First, it only reflects findings from two schools in each of five countries. Second, frameworks such as this tend towards simplification, as a result of efforts to ensure that they are succinct and easy to understand, and nuances may be lost. Issues specific to a country's context would need to be introduced before using the framework.

Figure 5. Framework for measuring healthy relationships



School environment		
Teacher preparedness and support	Delivery of CSE	Parental involvement
☒ Pre/in-service training provided to teachers on CSE content and pedagogies, with regular refresher trainings offered ☒ Teachers have opportunities to reflect on their own cultural and personal values relevant to healthy relationships ☒ Teachers have opportunities to exchange and receive peer support from other CSE teachers ☒ Teachers and school administrators are trained on and supported to use positive discipline and conflict resolution with learners in the school environment ☒ School administrators are supportive of the CSE programme and the educators delivering it ☒ Teachers have access to teaching aids and materials, including audio-visual and digital materials ☒ Teachers have a positive attitude about the potential of CSE and recognize its importance for healthy relationships during adolescence	☒ CSE curricular documents set clear learning objectives on healthy relationships ☒ Teachers use engaging, learner-centred pedagogies that draw on learners' lived experiences ☒ Teachers facilitate safe, comfortable environments in the classroom for questions/debates/discussions ☒ Teachers create opportunities for learners to practise their relationships skills using real life scenarios ☒ Learners feel comfortable asking the teacher questions during CSE lessons ☒ Learners feel comfortable disagreeing with others, including the teacher, in CSE lessons ☒ Teachers view themselves as important role models and mentors for learners in navigating relationships in the school environment ☒ External stakeholders involved in delivering CSE programming work closely with educators to ensure harmony in content delivery ☒ All educators in the school environment are aware of the CSE programme and its objectives with regard to healthy relationships	☒ Training with parents on how to cultivate healthy relationships with their adolescent children

CSE curricular content	Cross-cutting skills
Cross-cutting: ☒ Relationship types ☒ Characteristics of healthy relationships ☒ Characteristics of unhealthy relationships ☒ Recognition that violence is never the victim's fault ☒ Support or help-seeking in difficult or uncomfortable situations ☒ Effective communication ☒ Defining one's own values ☒ Dispute or conflict resolution	☒ Self-acceptance (positive attitude towards yourself, your sexual identity, positive body self-concept) ☒ Agency (control of own sexuality and bodies), confidence ☒ Understanding of oneself, self-esteem, self-criticism ☒ Relationship skills (communication, assertiveness skills) ☒ Competence in critiquing media views on (sexual) relationships ☒ Understanding lifelong learning and being able to change ☒ Communication skills, listening skills ☒ Empathy, respect, tolerance, loyalty ☒ Critical thinking ☒ Self-forgiveness ☒ Ability to forgive the other ☒ Gender equality, respect for gender identity ☒ Honesty, kindness
Parents/caregivers: ☒ Recognizing changes in relationship with parents during adolescence ☒ Effective communication between parents and adolescents ☒ Understanding that violence can occur in families ☒ Recognition that parents influence adolescents' lives (values, decision-making), including with regard to gender ☒ Resolving conflict with parents	
Peers/friends: ☒ Healthy and unhealthy dynamics between friends ☒ Qualities and responsibilities of a good friend ☒ Communicating effectively with peers and friends ☒ Dealing with conflict between peers and friends ☒ Ways that peers and friends influence adolescents' beliefs, including about sex and relationships ☒ Understanding bullying and harassment and its harms ☒ Standing up for your beliefs amongst peers and friends ☒ Thinking critically about what is shared on social media ☒ Knowing when to intervene and when to seek support if you witness bullying or violence ☒ Demonstrating empathy and kindness for peers ☒ Starting and ending friendships ☒ Identifying stigma, bias and discrimination amongst peers ☒ Knowing when to keep a friend's secret and when to seek support	
Romantic partners: ☒ Recognizing that romantic feelings and interest is a normal part of growing up ☒ Recognizing gender norms and related social expectations affect romantic relationships ☒ Identifying harmful dynamics in romantic relationships ☒ Understanding consent in romantic relationships, including recognizing when it is given and how to give consent ☒ Identifying the responsibilities that come with long-term relationships ☒ Recognizing the differences between how romantic relationships are portrayed in the media and how they are in real life ☒ Identifying the desired qualities in a romantic partner ☒ Seeking support if you or someone you know is experiencing violence in a romantic relationship ☒ Saying no to sex if you do not feel ready or do not want to have it ☒ Making important decisions with a romantic partner	

Short-term outcomes				
Learner-parent	Learner-peer	Learner-romantic partner	Learner-teacher	Educators
- Adolescents can identify the qualities of a healthy parent-child relationship - Adolescents recognize the ways in which their parents influence their beliefs and values - Adolescents accept that there are changes to the relationship with their parents during adolescence - Adolescents feel prepared to communicate their feelings or emotions with parents - Adolescents feel prepared to discuss their experiences and perspectives as an adolescent with parents - Adolescents feel prepared to disagree respectfully with parents - Adolescents feel prepared to identify violence when it occurs in the family	- Adolescents can identify the qualities of a healthy peer or friend relationship - Adolescents can identify unhealthy dynamics in a peer or friend relationship - Adolescents can name elements of effective communication with peers and friends (e.g. active listening) - Adolescents can identify strategies for addressing conflict with peers and friends - Adolescents recognize the ways in which peers influence their beliefs and values - Adolescents can identify bullying and its harms amongst peers - Adolescents respect differences amongst peers - Adolescents feel prepared to stand up for their personal values in relationships with peers and friends - Adolescents feel prepared to think critically about what to share on social media - Adolescents feel prepared to take action when they witness violence or harassment amongst peers - Adolescents feel prepared to start and end friendships - Adolescents know how to express empathy and support for their peers and friends - Adolescents know when to keep secrets and when to seek help for peers or friends	- Adolescents recognize that interest in romantic relationships is a part of their development - Adolescents recognize how gender norms influence romantic relationships - Adolescents can identify healthy and unhealthy dynamics in a romantic relationship - Adolescents understand how to receive and give consent for sexual activity - Adolescents recognize the difference between romantic relationships as portrayed in the media versus real life - Adolescents feel prepared to identify the characteristics that they want in a romantic partner - Adolescents feel prepared to seek support if they or someone else experiences violence in a romantic relationship - Adolescents feel prepared to give positive consent to sexual activity - Adolescents feel prepared to say 'no' to sexual activity - Adolescents feel prepared to recognize when consent is given and when it is not given by a sexual partner - Adolescents feel prepared to communicate with a romantic partner about what they want/don't want to happen in the relationship	- Adolescents can identify an educator that they trust in the school environment - Adolescents feel comfortable asking their trusted educator(s) for support	- Educators feel comfortable delivering all components of the CSE curriculum to learners - Educators value the use of participatory methods when teaching CSE

Intermediate-term outcomes

Learner-parent	Learner-peer	Learner-romantic partner	Learner-educator	School environment
- Adolescents' overall relationships with their parents increase in quality - Adolescents communicate their perspectives to their parents - Adolescents empathize with parents' perspectives - Adolescents compromise with their parents in challenging situations	- Adolescents' overall relationships with peers and friends increase in quality - Adolescents choose friendships with healthy dynamics - Adolescents end friendships with unhealthy dynamics - Adolescents express and act upon empathy with peers and friends, including those who are different from themselves - Adolescents regulate their emotions within friendships - Adolescents experience fewer conflicts with peers and friends - Adolescents support peers and friends who experience adversity	- Adolescents' overall relationships with romantic partners increase in quality - Adolescents enter into romantic relationships when they feel ready - Adolescents enter into romantic relationships with partners who possess the characteristics they value - Adolescents reject harmful, gendered understandings of romantic relationships - Adolescents express their own desires within a romantic relationship - Adolescents say no to sex when they are not ready or willing	- Educators' relationships with learners improve - Learners feel that educators value their perspectives	- Reductions in instances of bullying and violence in the school environment - Learners feel physically safe in the school - Learners feel emotionally supported by educators in the school - Educators' overall teaching improves

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Learning about healthy relationships

Effects of school-based sexuality education

This report examines how CSE equips adolescents with the relationship skills they need to learn and thrive. Drawing on mixed methods research from Argentina (Buenos Aires Province), Armenia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Namibia and Nigeria (Lagos State), it explores how national, school-based CSE programmes influence learners' knowledge, communication and emotional well-being.

The findings show that well-delivered CSE can strengthen parent-child communication, deepen empathy among peers, and help young people identify unhealthy patterns in romantic relationships. The report highlights CSE's broader role in supporting safe, respectful and supportive interpersonal connections, which will also contribute to good health and well-being outcomes in the longer term.

These insights guide ministries and partners in refining national programmes so every learner receives CSE that equips them to build healthy relationships throughout life.

