

RESEARCH BASED TEMPLATE

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Do Australian teachers feel supported to deliver Relationships and Sexuality Education in schools?

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Background:

Effective delivery of school-based Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) requires multiple enabling conditions, including teacher training, supportive leadership, adequate time, and engagement with the wider school community. Despite this, little is known about how Australian teachers experience these supports in practice. This study examines teachers' perceptions of whole-school support for RSE and explores associations between training, institutional support, and confidence to deliver RSE.

Methods:

Data were drawn from the 3rd National RSE Teachers Survey 2025 ($N=482$), a national cross-sectional survey of primary, secondary, and pre-service teachers in Australia. Measures included perceived prioritisation of RSE within schools, self-rated RSE content knowledge, extent of in-service training, perceived support from school leadership, and time allocated for RSE planning and delivery. Associations between forms of support, perceived knowledge, and comfort delivering RSE were examined using chi-square analyses.

Results:

Teachers generally perceived RSE as moderately to highly valued within their schools and reported relatively high levels of content knowledge. Greater exposure to RSE-related training was significantly associated with increased comfort delivering RSE ($p<.001$). Perceived support from school leadership was associated with both higher perceived content knowledge and greater comfort delivering RSE ($p<.001$). Access to appropriate training and sufficient time for lesson planning were also significantly associated with both outcomes ($p<.001$). While most teachers reported strong leadership support, perceptions of parent support were more variable. Although many teachers indicated that their school had policies to manage negative community responses to RSE, a notable proportion reported an absence of such structures or uncertainty about their existence.

Conclusion:

Findings highlight the importance of whole-school support for effective RSE delivery. Strengthening teacher training, ensuring protected planning time, and embedding clear policies to manage community concerns may enhance teacher confidence and support consistent, equitable implementation of RSE across schools.

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