

Pacific High School students' experiences of Sexual and Reproductive Health Education in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Background:

Pacific sexual and reproductive health in Aotearoa New Zealand is characterized by disproportionate high levels of teenage pregnancy, sexual transmitted infections, and unwanted sexual contact. Current understandings of Pacific Youth sexual and reproductive experiences are limited and efforts to deliver culturally appropriate sexuality education within the school setting are challenged by lack of resources and cultural taboos and sensitivities. This study aimed to understand Pacific youth experiences of sexuality education at school to ascertain culturally responsive approaches to sexuality education for Pacific youth in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Method:

The study used the Pacific Talanoa methodology to carry out group discussions with Pacific youth aged 16-18 years old. A total of six Talanoa group discussions were carried out over a three-month period.

Results:

The study found Pacific youth experiences to be influenced by the availability of sexual and reproductive health education at primary school, which varied depending on the primary school that students attended. Discussions about abstinence, sex before marriage, and raising questions in the home were culturally aligned to Pacific values of family, taboo and gender. Perspectives of trust, privacy, and confidentiality within the school setting was important amongst youth who were not familiar with being able to speak freely at home about sexual health topics. Pornography, online safety and social media use were areas that youth found challenging to navigate when trying to explore and understand their sexual and reproductive health needs.

Conclusion:

Culturally aligned sexuality education for Pacific youth involve the consideration of family expectations, taboo, gender, and online safety in education programmes.

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