



Comprehensive sexuality and consent education among adolescents with intellectual disability in New South Wales, Australia

Anju Devkota^{1,2}, Fiona Robards¹, Iryna Zablotska^{1,2}

¹The University of Sydney, Faculty of Medicine and Health, Westmead, Australia

²Western Sydney Sexual Health Centre, Western Sydney Local Health District, Parramatta, Australia

Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)

According to the United Nations' *international technical guidance on sexuality education*, CSE is:

- curriculum-based process of teaching and learning diverse aspects of sexuality¹
- based on internationally accepted human rights^{1,2}
- age and developmentally appropriate¹
- vital element of adolescent health interventions^{1,2}

Background

- Affirmative consent law in NSW was introduced in June 2022.³
- Consent and respectful relationships curriculum is mandatory from 2023.⁴
- There is a significant gap in sexuality education for adolescents with intellectual disabilities with poor sexual health literacy globally and in Australia.⁵⁻⁷

Objectives

1. Explore knowledge about CSE and how that knowledge is acquired among adolescents with intellectual disabilities, parents and carers, teachers, disability and healthcare providers.
2. Assess the current content of sexuality education and consent delivered.
3. Investigate self-perceived competence of sexuality education and care providers.
4. Investigate the feasibility of providing sexuality and consent education, including structural resources, barriers & enablers.

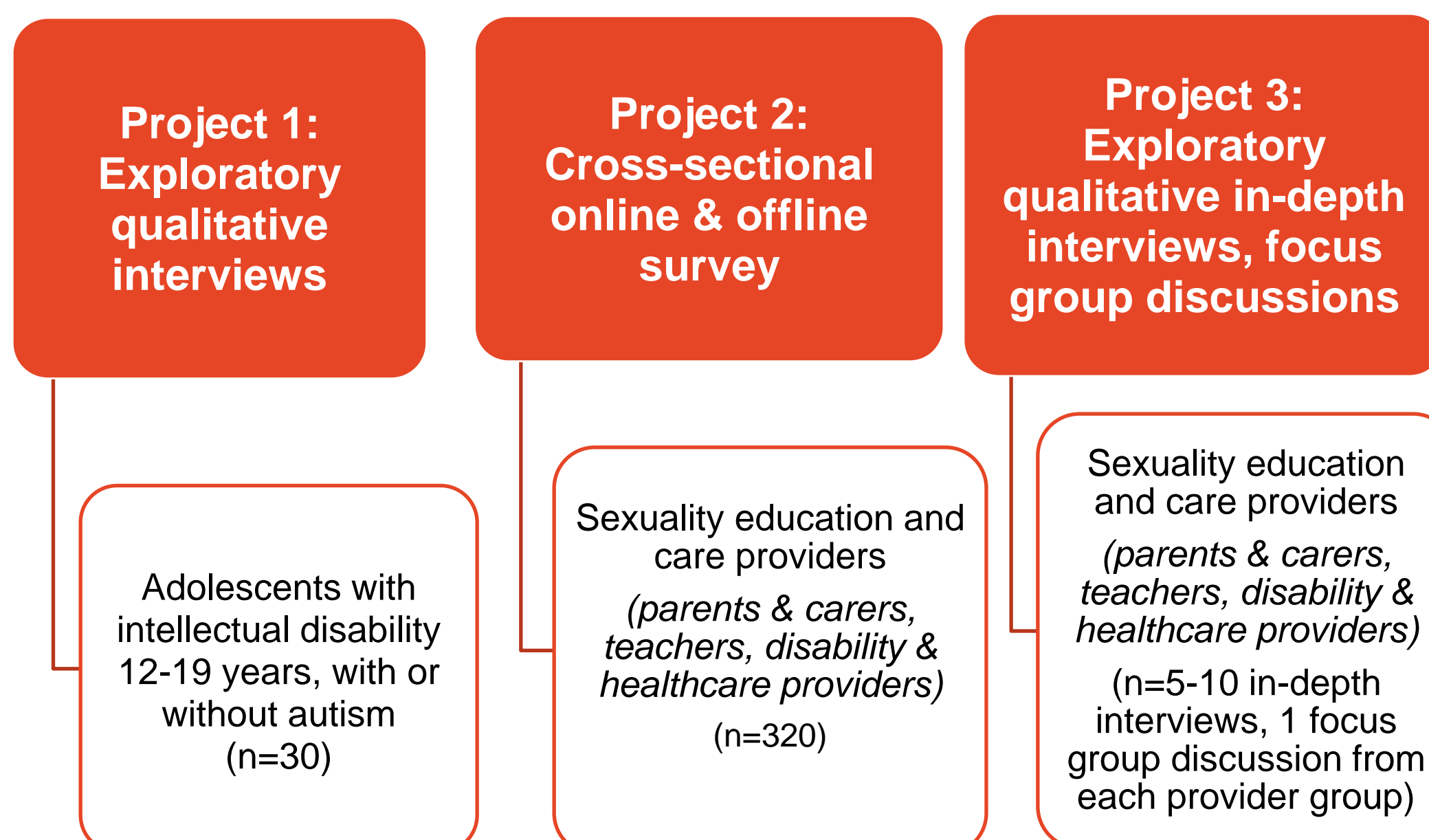
Methods/Approach

The study will use mixed methods design guided by a socio-ecological model. It will consist of three projects.

Project 1 will employ in-depth interviews with adolescents with intellectual disabilities 12-19 years to explore how CSE knowledge is acquired. Project 2 will be a cross-sectional survey with sexuality education and care providers including parents and carers, teachers, disability and healthcare providers. In Project 3, key-informant interviews and focus group discussions will be conducted with same provider groups from project 2 to investigate the feasibility of providing CSE, including structural resources, barriers, and enablers.

The study will be carried out in partnership with Schools for Specific Purposes, Department of Education, Autism Spectrum schools, Family Planning NSW, Carers Association NSW, Council for Intellectual Disability, community-based disability advocacy organisations, including General Practice and health care organisations. Also, a key stakeholder reference groups will be established to guide this project.

The study will identify the curricular gaps for adolescents with disabilities, need for revision of existing teaching/support resource materials, and professional development needs for sexuality education providers.



Expected outcomes

This study is conducted as part of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) work.

The findings will:

- Be reported in PhD thesis and publications.
- Be shared with stakeholders in the field, published & presented at subsequent conferences.
- Inform recommendations on the development of new approaches to sexuality education.
- Improve student, parent, teachers, health and disability service providers' experience of intellectual disability-specific sexuality and consent education based on identified needs.

Significance

New evidence will inform the need for revision of existing curricular resources and changes required in sexuality education curriculum to meet the needs of adolescents with intellectual disability.

It will also inform interventions to improve the delivery of sexuality education, such as by new resource development, professional development training for sexuality education providers and make policy recommendations.

References

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- 5 Michielsen K, Brockschmidt L. Barriers to sexuality education for children and young people with disabilities in the WHO European region: a scoping review. Sex Education. 2021 Nov 2;21(6):674-92.
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Further information

Anju Devkota, PhD candidate, Faculty of Medicine and Health, The University of Sydney adev0196@uni.sydney.edu.au

Dr. Fiona Robards, Co-supervisor, Faculty of Medicine and Health, The University of Sydney fiona.robards@sydney.edu.au

Associate Professor Iryna Zablotska-Manos, Primary supervisor, Faculty of Medicine and Health, The University of Sydney iryna.zablotska@sydney.edu.au