

Introduction

Comprehensive sex education (CSE): age- and developmentally-appropriate instruction that supports individuals in understanding the human body, love, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, sexual intimacy, pleasure and reproduction (UNESCO, 2018).

- CSE programs have been associated with positive outcomes for young people, including fewer sexually transmitted infections, school dropout, and unintended pregnancy (Grossman et al., 2014).

Although schools may provide a forum in which to offer sex education to all individuals, individuals with disabilities face unique barriers to sex education, including:

- The myth of asexuality
- Low teacher self-efficacy
- Caregiver restriction

Despite these barriers, some individuals with disabilities are receiving sex education in schools; however, little is known about the characteristics of these programs or who is receiving access to them.

Research Questions

- What are the characteristics of students with disabilities who are receiving school-based kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) sex education interventions?
- What are the characteristics and target outcomes of school-based K-12 sex education interventions?



Methods

Inclusion Criteria:

- Available in English
- Published in peer-reviewed journal
- Intervention occurred in K-12 school (any country)
- Intervention included a sex education component
- Included participants with a documented disability

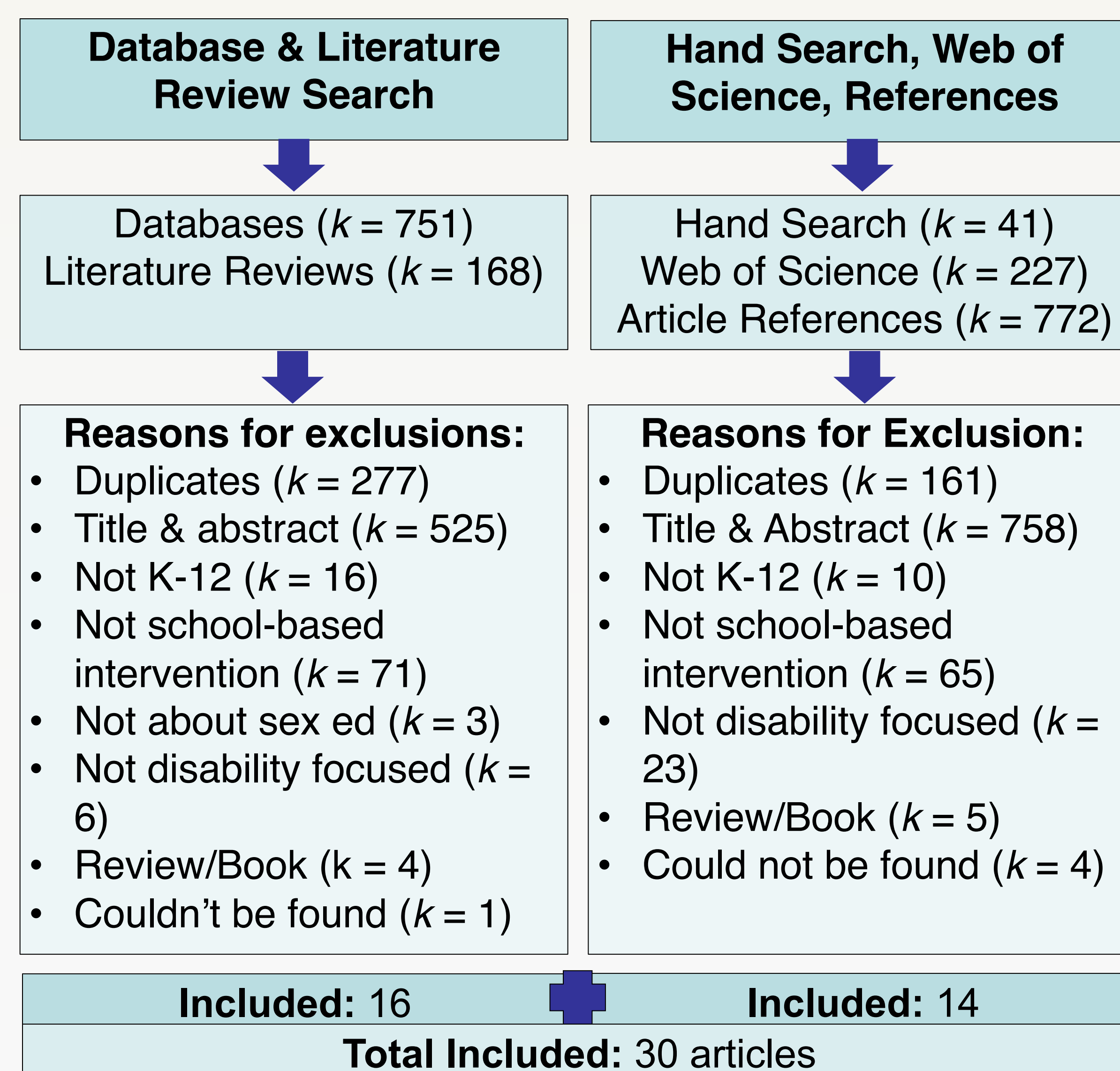
Databases Searched:



Search Terms:

- Sex education OR sex educator OR sex educators OR sexual education OR sexuality education OR sexuality educators
- Intervention* Or program
- Disability OR disabilities OR disabled OR special needs OR special education
 - Also conducted searches for all 13 IDEA categories of disability
- School OR class* OR K-12

Screening & Extended Search Procedures:

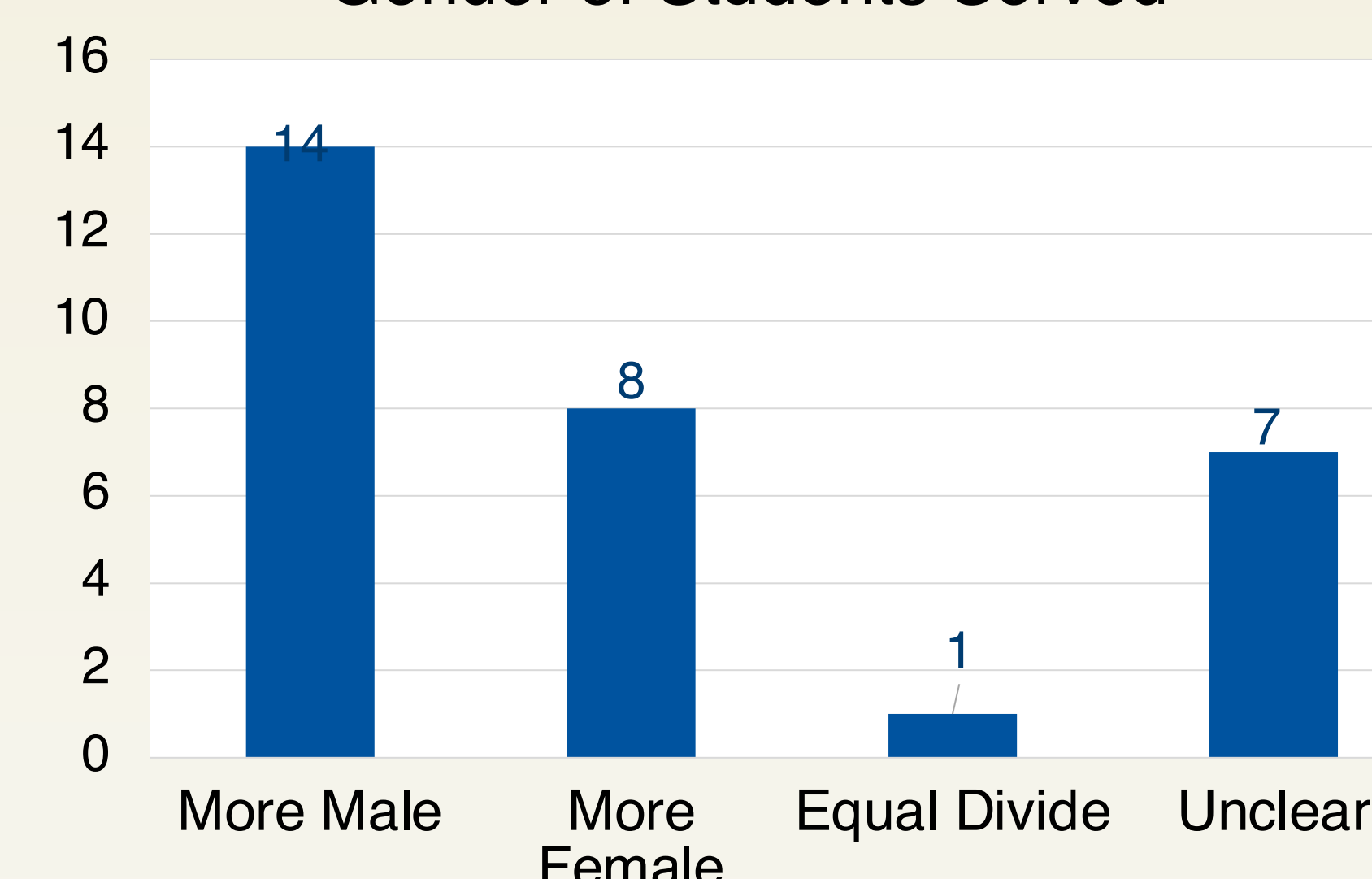


Results

Characteristics of Students:

Disability Served	N
Autism	3
Emotional Disturbance	2
Hearing Impairment	1
Intellectual & Developmental Disability	8
Learning Disability	4
Multiple Disability Categories	6
Physical Disability	3
Unclear	3

Gender of Students Served



7 - 22 Children served were between the age of 7 and 22 years old.

Characteristics of Outcomes:

Target Outcomes	N
Comprehensive Sex Ed	8
The Human Body	8
Hygiene & Menstrual Care	6
Safety	8
Social & Relationship Skills	5

3 classes – 80 weeks

The shortest intervention occurred over 3 classes. The longest intervention lasted 80 weeks. Most interventions were between 25 minutes and 1.5 hours.

Delivery Agents

- Researchers
- Teachers
- Graduate students
- Psychologists
- Social Workers
- Health Professionals
- School staff

Settings

- Special schools
- Hospitals
- Treatment Centers
- Special education classrooms within public schools

Discussion

Perpetuation of Ableist Belief Systems

- Only 8 studies of 30 (26.7%) offered CSE.
- Emphasis on prevention (e.g., prevention of sexually transmitted infections) can exaggerate risks.
- Interventions that focus on hygiene and menstrual care may not recognize that individuals with disabilities are sexual beings.
- A focus on sexual abuse prevention, without also helping individuals with disabilities to establish and maintain healthy relationships, suggests that people with disabilities cannot be consensual participants of healthy sexual activities.

Limitations and Implications

- School-focus prevents understanding of sex education interventions that occur outside of school.
- A lack of research does not allow us to examine outcomes for specific disability categories, but there may be differences in what works based on disability diagnosis.
- Research has not examined dosage of intervention.
- Policies should be devised that ensure students have access to comprehensive sex education.
- Practitioners should ensure that sex education is comprehensive and inclusive, including ensuring instruction includes disability-specific examples and is not ableist or heteronormative.

Intersectionality

- Individuals' multiple identities (e.g., race, class, religion, physical appearance, gender, sex, and sexuality) affect experiences and behaviors.
- Less than 1/3 of studies addressed lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, + (LGBTQ+) issues. Those that did often "othered" LGBTQ+ individuals.
- Student race was not frequently reported.
- Without information about race, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the types of sex education available to students with disabilities from different racial and ethnic backgrounds.