



The 5th International Conference on Agriculture and Life Sciences of Albania 2030

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Agricultural University of Tirana, Kodër-Kamëz, Tirana

PROCEEDINGS



**The 5th International Conference
on Agriculture and Life Sciences of Albania 2030**

Tirana, 3-5 November 2025

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PROCEEDINGS OF INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AGRICULTURE AND LIFE SCIENCES OF ALBANIA 2030 (ICOALS 5)

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FOOD SAFETY OR SEX EDUCATION: WHICH SHOULD BE TAUGHT FIRST IN 9-YEAR SCHOOLS?

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ABSTRACT

In the Albanian education system, sex education has started to be partially included in some subjects, while food safety – a fundamental component of public health – is almost completely absent from the 9-year education curriculum. This study aims to assess parents' perceptions and attitudes on the importance of these two areas, in order to determine which should have priority in early health education. The study is based on a structured questionnaire for parents of different educational levels and ages, who assess their knowledge, health habits and the priorities they give to food safety and sex education. The results show that, although both topics are important, knowledge on safe food, hygiene and prevention of food poisoning have a more immediate and practical impact on children's health. The study proposes the gradual integration of food safety education as a basis for building a comprehensive health education in Albanian schools.

Keyword: *Food safety, sex education, public health, school curriculum*

INTRODUCTION

Providing education on food safety is believed to be essential in preventing foodborne diseases among school-aged children. It should be noted that there are numerous studies around the world that have addressed food safety education globally, particularly for primary and lower secondary school students. [3]

Meanwhile, in our country, very little has been done theoretically, and even less in practice, to introduce food safety concepts at these educational levels. While sexual education has only recently been introduced into the school curriculum for this age group, mainly integrated into the subject “Biology 8”, [2], food safety, which could be equally essential starting from preschool education, is not addressed at all. In fact, the current curriculum includes one lesson on nutrition in “Natural Sciences 3” [1] and 5–6 lessons on nutrition in the “Biology 8” module. [2]

As for food safety, the latter contains only three lines about reading food labels. In this regard, there have been only 2–3 project initiatives in 2019, such as the “School Canteens” Project implemented in five municipalities, and the “Fresh Fruit in School” Project launched in Vlora. However, no significant progress has been made in this area.

Experts suggest that schools should integrate nutrition education with education on the safety of foods consumed. If food safety education were properly implemented during early childhood, it would have a positive impact on children's behaviors before they become fixed, shaping healthier and safer habits from an early age.

METHODOLOGY

Research instrument: Questionnaire with 9 questions in three sections: awareness and attitude towards food safety, perceptions on sex education, comparative personal attitude towards the two problems being discussed.

Target population: Parents of different ages and educational levels, who may or may not have children in school at the time of the survey.

Sample selection: Random, with gender, age and educational level representation in three cities of the country: Tirana, Kamëz and Lezha.

Sample size: 22 and 24 parents for each sample in three cities of the country (70 in total).

Data analysis: Statistical processing (percentages, comparisons of concepts for the two education programs, food safety education and sexual education).

The results that emerge from the statistical processing of the questionnaires confirm our hypotheses and the expectations of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first section, perceptions on food safety

It was found that all parents interviewed in the three Albanian cities, Tirana, Kamëz, and Lezhë, consider the safety of the food their children consume in extracurricular settings to be important, with a response rate of 100 percent.

All parents, at a rate of 100 percent, think that their children should receive lessons on food safety from the first grades of primary school.

Despite the importance parents attach to the safety of the food their children consume, and despite their unanimous agreement (100%) that children of this age should receive food safety lessons from the first grades of primary school, differences emerge when it comes to how well-informed they are about the safety of the food their children purchase at schoolyards or outside the school environment. Only 38% demonstrate knowledge assessed at the maximum level (grade 5), while 36% are assessed at the minimum level (grade 1).

The second section: Perceptions of Sexual Education

49% of parents rated the importance of teaching sexual education in the 9-year school system with the maximum score (5), while only 20% considered it unimportant to teach this subject at this educational level (Figure 1).

Regardless of their opinion on the importance of sexual education in this school cycle, 70% of parents believe that students older than the 9-year school level are ready to receive such lessons, 21% believe they are not ready, and 9% are unsure.

Parents' knowledge of the sexual education program offered in 9-year schools is low. 54% of them have no knowledge of what their children learn in this module, while only 27% are informed, and the remaining parents have limited knowledge.

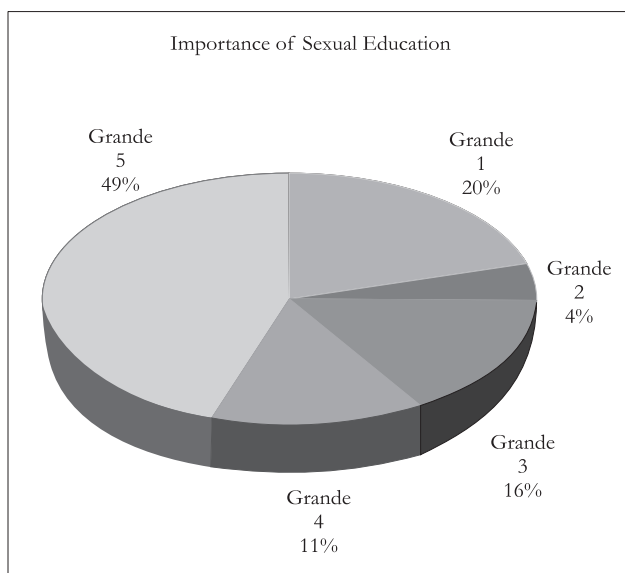


Figure 1. Importance of Sexual Education

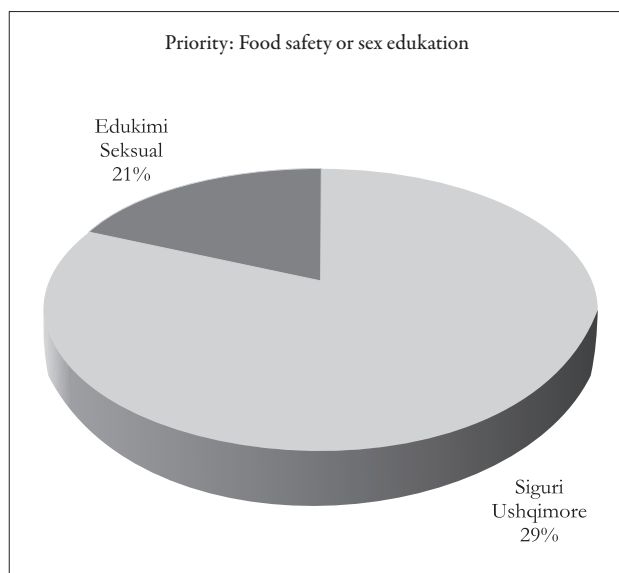


Figure 2. Priority: food safety or sex education?

Comparison and Personal Attitude

When asked which of the two modules, Food Safety or Sexual Education, should be given priority if the school could include only one in its curriculum, 79% of parents stated that the food safety program is more important and should take priority, while 21% thought the opposite (Figure 2).

In response to the question, “Would you support the introduction of a food safety module in the 9-year school cycle?”, 100% of parents answered positively (“Yes”).

Similarly, when asked whether they themselves would be willing to participate in food safety training, all parents (100%) responded affirmatively.

CONCLUSIONS

Food safety is identified by parents as the top priority in health education for children of this age. An early start helps establish habits that last a lifetime. In all cities where the surveys were conducted, 100% of parents expressed support for introducing a food safety module in schools, and the need for acquiring such knowledge was rated as equally important (100%). Sex education is not excluded by parents but is ranked as a second priority after food safety. The surveys reveal that parents have limited information about the safety of the foods their children consume at school. Only 38% report having adequate knowledge.

Food safety does not necessarily need to be taught as a stand-alone subject; it can be effectively integrated into existing modules such as Civic Education, Science, Biology, or even embedded in daily school activities.

Teaching children simple practices, such as proper handwashing, avoiding cross-contamination, and understanding expiration dates, may seem basic, but these lessons can prevent illness and save lives. [3]

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