Does the Primary Resource of Sex Education Matter? A Swiss National Study

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## Authors

Barrense-Dias Y.;Akre C.;Surís J.;Berchtold A.;Morselli D.;Jacot-Descombes C.;Leeners B.

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# Abstract

Sex education (SE) remains a subject of debate, including controversies on resources. The purposeof this paper was to determine the main SE resource during adolescence and its associations with personal characteristics and sexual behaviors of youths. Data were obtained from a selfadministrated Swiss national survey on sexuality among young adults (mean age 26.3). Participants (N = 4978) were divided into six groups according to their main SE resource during their adolescence: Friends (1939; 38.9%), Parents (1361; 27.3%), School (n = 949; 19.1%), The Internet (399; 8.0%), Nobody (172; 3.5%) and Other (157; 3.2%). Groups were compared on sociodemographic, first sexual experiences, pregnancy, risky sexual behaviors, and undesired sexual experiences data. Males and non-heterosexual participants were overrepresented in the Internet group while, females more often reported their parents as their main SE resource. Participants in the School group reported the lowest rates of sexually transmitted infections and Friends the highest. Compared to the School group, those in the Friends, Internet, Nobody, and Other groups were more likely to report undesired sexual experiences. Few differences appeared between parents and school. Even though some resources such as friends or the Internet presented negative outcomes when they were assessed individually, we cannot deny the important place that they occupy in the lives of some youths.

# Outcome

Overall, friends and parents preceded school as the main SE resource. Males and non-heterosexual participants wereoverrepresented in the Internet group, while females more
often reported their parents. Few differences appeared between parents and school in terms of first sexual experiences, risky sexual behaviors, and undesired sexual experiences.
Even though some resources such as friends or the Internet presented negative outcomes, the important place they may have for some youths can not be denied. Therefore, in addition to a holistic SE in terms of topics, it is necessary to consider a multi-resource approach to
ensure continuity and consistency of prevention and health promoting messages. Indeed, while a strong partnership between school and parents is the best strategy to cover all
aspects of sexuality, other additional resources should also be considered and analyzed in a positive way.