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**The Role of *Sexual Pleasure* in Comprehensive Sexuality
Education in International Development**

*A qualitative case study of RFSU and their partner organizations exploring
sexual pleasure and its inclusion in CSE*

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Abstract

The study examines pleasure-inclusive CSE within the case of RFSU and their partner organizations and their experiences of challenges and possibilities with CSE implementation and its cultural sensitivity. Experiences in both formal national CSE curricula such as in school-settings, and non-formal settings which reach out-of-school youth, such as in community centres or faith-based organizations, are explored. Secondly, the study analyses this with a critical lens on the dilemma of cultural sensitivity and organizational goals. The study also seeks to inspire future CSE projects/programs. The contribution derives from semi-structured interviews with key informants from RFSU, their partner organizations, and two additional CSE expert inputs. To triangulate the data, the interviews transcripts were complemented with documentary material. Qualitative content analysis was used for data analysis. Findings show a shared notion of the importance of pleasure-inclusive CSE as it is perceived to lead to increased sexual well-being. However, including sexual pleasure in CSE interventions faces many challenges in traditional and religious contexts. The language of sexuality is important, where most religions do not use the language of ‘rights’ but use their own theology to discuss sexuality. There are opportunities to better discuss issues of sexuality through non-formal settings rather than formal settings.

Keywords: sexual health, sexual rights, sexual well-being, sexual pleasure, sex-positivity, comprehensive sexuality education, isomorphism, decoupling, critical pedagogy

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List of Abbreviations

CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
GAB	Global Advisory Board for Sexual Health and Well-being
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IPPF	International Planned Parenthood Federation
RFSU	The Swedish Association for Sexuality Education
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
STI's	Sexually Transmitted Infections
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WAS	World Association for Sexual Health
WHO	Worlds Health Organization

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1. Introduction

"It is a topic that recently been brought up from feminist movements, but there are many strong cultural values embedded in our societies that do not allow us to talk about sexual pleasure openly" (P4)

This quote reflects a concern raised by one partner organization of the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU). It indicates the underlying challenges with RFSU's aim to include sex-positive topics as sexual pleasure in international Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) programs/projects (RFSU, 2015). As the quote emphasizes, sexual pleasure has been discussed by many feminist scholars, and the debate around sexual pleasure is increasing within the field of international development (Allen and Carmody, 2012; Ford et al., 2019; Gruskin et al., 2019). It is argued that sexual pleasure could positively contribute to sexual health and well-being. However, information on pleasure-inclusive CSE implementation in contexts where this topic is very culturally sensitive overall lacks in existing research (Roodsaz, 2018; Coultas et al., 2020). The studies discussing pleasure-inclusive CSE have mostly been from a Eurocentric 'health-based approach' (Singh, Both & Philpott, 2020).

In 2015, RFSU developed an international strategy that states the purpose of increasing pleasure-inclusive CSE projects/programs with their partner organizations. However, it might not be a *matter of course* that their partner organizations have the opportunities to include pleasure in CSE in societies where sexual pleasure is culturally sensitive. Previous research is limited in explaining the role of sexual pleasure in CSE in cultures where religion and culture play an essential role in shaping people's behaviors and expectations (Roodsaz, 2018). In reflecting whether it is about 'universal' ideas (Ibid.) including pleasure in CSE, it might be a more significant issue than simply realizing its importance. One issue is whether RFSU takes into account the cultural values in the environments where their partner organizations operate or not. Meyer (2007) argues that global models of 'the good society' are isomorphic, which are maintained by institutions that create a 'world society' (Ibid:263). Within this perspective, the issue of that RFSU's pleasure-inclusive initiatives facing cultural and societal barriers could indicate that there are external pressures for its implementation on notions of what 'a good CSE model' should entail. Another issue is the risk of what Freire (1970) mentions as 'oppressive'

education, which can occur if educational models is constructed by ‘outsiders’ as not by the target population themselves.

1.1 Research Aim

Two aims guide the study. The first aim is to explore and explain the role of sexual pleasure in CSE within RFSU and its partner organizations. Also, the study examines the challenges and opportunities the research participants face with implementing pleasure-inclusive CSE and its sensitivity in both formal and non-formal settings.

The second aim is to shed light on the potential dilemma between the desire to include pleasure in CSE and its cultural sensitivity with critical theoretical concepts of Meyer (2007) and Freire (1997). This to enable an in-depth analysis of experiences with including sexual pleasure without assuming its importance and possibilities. Also avoiding simplifying its implementation globally, or what could be called reinforcement of ‘universal ideas’ (Roodsaz, 2018).

1.1.1 Research Questions and sub-questions

The study employed the following research questions:

- 1) How do RFSU and its partner organizations view sexual pleasure and its role in CSE?
 - How does the promotion of sexual pleasure fit with the local environments in which the research participants operate?
- 2) Which are the main challenges and opportunities of including sexual pleasure in CSE projects/programs?
 - How should we ‘frame’ sexual pleasure within CSE for young people in projects/programs?
- 3) According to the research participants, which strategies, methods, or practices have been successful and can inspire future CSE programming?

In addition, the study seeks to increase the understanding of pleasure-inclusive CSE, which may assist development actors in their future projects/programs. This with the ambition of bringing attention to the realities of CSE practitioners themselves, which can allow for insights of culturally relevant methods and the first steps to include pleasure in CSE initiatives.

1.2 Background

Before we delve into this study, the leading actors in the field of pleasure-inclusive CSE, including the case RFSU, will now be presented;

1.2.1 The ‘Pleasure Enthusiasts’

The Global Advisory Board for Sexual Health and Well-being (GAB, 2016) is one of the leading actors to promote sexual pleasure and create effective links between sexual health, sexual rights, and sexual pleasure. GAB’s *sexual pleasure training toolkit* (2018) provides specific guidance on how sexual and reproductive health (SRH) providers can use a sex-positive approach to explore issues related to sexual pleasure with their target population. The World Association for Sexual Health (WAS, 2008) has also recognized the linkages between sexual pleasure, rights, and health, which is stated in the newly developed *Declaration on Sexual Pleasure* (WAS, 2019). Share-Net International is another key actor. They strive to combine expertise between Dutch organizations, Southern partners, and key international actors to achieve the SRHR and HIV-related SDGs (Share-Net International, n.d.). They have newly produced a *Sexual Pleasure Checklist*, which is based on inspiration from the work of GAB (Share-Net International, 2021). The checklist is meant to be used as a first step in improving SRH policies and programs by estimating to what extent sexual pleasure and well-being are integrated. The Pleasure Project (2021) was one of the first to advocate for the inclusion of pleasure in sexuality education. They created *The Global Mapping of Pleasure* (Pleasure Project, 2008), a document identifying projects and organizations worldwide that prioritize pleasure in HIV prevention and sexual health promotion.

The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) is an international umbrella organization with members in almost all countries in the world (IPPF, n.d.). They argue that sexuality education should provide young people with the knowledge they need to determine and enjoy their physical, emotional and individual sexuality (IPPF, 2010). IPPF was one of the co-writers of the *It’s All One Curriculum Guideline*, which argues pleasure to be a central part of human sexuality, as it can increase happiness, well-being, and health (The population Council, 2009).

Within the case of RFSU, both *It’s All One Curriculum* (Population Council, 2009) and the *International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education* (UNESCO, 2018) are two international guidelines most commonly used for their CSE project/program designs (RFSU,

2019b). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2018:138) also highlights pleasure as an essential topic in CSE projects/programs.

1.2.2 The Case – RFSU

RFSU co-founded the IPPF in the 1950s and is now their Swedish member working with local IPPF organizations in different countries, regional offices, and global and European advocacy initiatives (RFSU, 2018). RFSU has been chosen as the case in this study because of their expertise and their efforts since the 1930s to improve sexuality education and to promote sex-positivity in Sweden (RFSU, 2019b). Arguably, RFSU is a pioneer in the area of sexual rights, health, and education in Sweden and has been part of a small sample of organizations that are ‘pleasure enthusiasts’ in the area of international development. Quite recently, the role of sexual pleasure in CSE has been highlighted in RFSU’s *International Program Strategy* (2015 – 2022), as the purpose is to “drive and mobilize for change towards sexual and reproductive health and rights, choice, and pleasure” (Ibid:11). RFSU believes that “CSE should be considered like any other knowledge-based subject at school, as math or history” (2019b:9). According to RFSU, a knowledge-based approach to sexuality helps demystify sexuality. Teaching in schools should offer a holistic view of sexuality, including societal, social, and scientific perspectives. RFSU imagines a “world where everyone has the freedom to be, choose, and enjoy” (2015:4).

1.3 The Relevance of Sexual Pleasure in International Development

In the past, sexual pleasure has largely been ignored in sexuality education and left unaddressed in public health and development approaches (Share-Net International, 2020: Ford et al., 2019). Moreover, the assumptions that pleasure only concerns individual experiences and do not have direct linkages to public health objectives, or because of the view that sexual pleasure promotes behaviors associated with the risks of Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unwanted pregnancies (Ford et al., 2019), could explain the lack of sexual pleasure in education. Although ‘preventing’ approaches is a fundamental cornerstone of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights¹ (SRHR), it has been argued to be essential to consider sexual rights more

¹ SRHR and SRH are used interchangeably throughout the study depending on the grounds on which the stated arguments highlights. SRHR means sexual and reproductive health and rights, and SRH means sexual and reproductive health.

as the promotion for people's well-being and sustainable development (Share-Net International, 2020). Only recently, SRHR organizations and professionals started to recognize the importance of sex-positivity to promote sexual health effectively (Ibid.). It has been recognized that some form of pleasure is often a vital motivation for sexual activity, and to exclude pleasure from CSE programs creates a disproportionate focus on ill-health risks and emotional consequences of sex (Ford et al., 2019; Gruskin et al., 2019; Philpott, Knerr, and Boydell, 2006). The Guttmacher-Lancet Commission has suggested an integrated definition of sexual health and sexual rights which links sexual pleasure and sexual health;

Sexual and reproductive health is a state of physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being in relation to all aspects of sexuality and reproduction, not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction, or infirmity. Therefore, a positive approach to sexuality and reproduction should recognize the part played by pleasurable sexual relationships, trust, and communication in promoting self-esteem and overall well-being. All individuals have a right to make decisions governing their bodies and to access services that support that right. (Starrs et al., 2018:2646)

By linking sexual pleasure with sexual health, well-being, development, and public health, we can consider how pleasure contributes to programs focused on the prevention of ill-health, as well as well-being promotion (Ford et al., 2019). In this way, sexual pleasure can be argued to be included into the sustainable development goals (SDGs) (Gruskin et al., 2019). Sexuality education and SRHR have been linked with SDG indicators, namely health (Goal 3), education (Goal 4), and gender equality (Goal 5) (Starrs et al., 2018:2647). Although key goals and targets for pleasure-integrated SDG are not completely defined, it has been argued that pleasure could be incorporated to the SDGs in the same way as SRHR (Ford et al., 2019; WAS, 2008). This could be supported by emphasizing the public health perspective, that sexual pleasure thus helps to protect people better than current approaches (Ibid.).

1.4 Disposition of The Study

The next chapter provides an overview of how previous research addressed sexual pleasure and its inclusion in CSE in the sphere of international development. This is followed by a description of relevant definitions when examining pleasure-inclusive CSE. Chapter three introduces the theoretical concepts guiding the analysis of the results, within Critical Pedagogy Theory (Freire, 1970) and Meyer's (2007) institutional perspective. Chapter four presents the

methodological choices that have guided the study, including research limitations, followed by ethical considerations. Chapter five presents the findings from the interview transcripts and documentary materials. In chapter six, the empirical results are analyzed with the theoretical concepts presented in chapter three and complemented with some theoretical underpinnings described in chapter two. The analytical discussion is followed by a conclusion and lastly, implications for future research.

2. Survey of The Field

Within the theoretical debate around sexuality education, a ‘pleasure-gap’ has been identified (Singh, Both & Philpott, 2020; Ford et al., 2019). Especially the lack of space and language for girls to explore sexual pleasure has been discussed (Lenskyj, 1990). Philpott, Knerr, and Boydell (2006) describe that sexuality education programs often use fear and risk of disease to motivate people to practice safer sex, which excludes that pleasurable sex promotes safe sex.

Since the work of Amartya Sen since the 1980s (Sen, 1980; Nussbaum, 2003), there has been a widespread understanding that development must go beyond mitigating economic poverty and towards an approach that focuses on human well-being, freedom of choice and desire (Safier, 2014). It has been argued that the idea of pleasure as a part of sexuality education is no longer new in sexuality studies (Allen and Carmody, 2012). Although Jackson (1978) had raised an earlier feminist critique of the ‘reproductive’ emphasis of sexuality education, the pleasure-gap was not noticed until Fine’s (1998) paper about the ‘missing discourse of desire’ in American sexuality education.

Although sexual pleasure has mostly been debated by female feminists, sex-positive aspects have also been brought up within the broader sphere of public health as part of addressing sexual health holistically (Philpott, Knerr, and Boydell 2006). It has also gained attention within safer sex education programs for gay men and by some male sexuality researchers (Ingham, 2005). According to Lamb (2010), the fact that the pleasure interest within sexuality programs mainly was driven by feminist scholars was because it was a way for feminists to regain power for young women lost through their sexual objectification, and ‘stereotypes of female passivity’ (Lamb 2010: 294). In contrast to this, Fine argues that this focus on pleasure would offer a more comprehensive model that visualizes girls experiencing rights and autonomy rather than objectification (Fine, 1988:50). Receiving education on sexual desire has been argued to enable girls to know what they desire, feel self-love, and gain self-esteem (Tolman, 2002). Lamb argues (2010: 94) that this individual-oriented sex-positive

approach was in opposition to traditions that taught women to perceive sex as dirty and shameful and instead emphasized women's role as objects of pleasure than explorers of such.

Tolman (2002) writes about the importance of young women having access to a discourse of desire in sexuality education that enables them to articulate and experience their desires. It is only about that young women should know what desire feels like and decide whether to engage in a particular sexual practice. This knowledge of pleasure is deemed to have a protective effect against sexual coercion or sexual behavior that young women do not actively desire. In line with this, Oriel (2005) critically discusses how sexual rights literature constructs sexuality as gender-neutral and how the focus on men's demand for sexual pleasure often links to masculinity norms and reinforces the subordination of women. Men's belief that they have a right to use women for sexual pleasure is a recognized barrier to effective HIV prevention. In addition, violence against women is fundamental to the construction of masculinity. Therefore, research should challenge the forms of sexuality and pleasure that reinforce masculinity to imagine sexual rights as based on sexual equality (Ibid.).

Lamb (2010) and Rasmussen (2012) draw attention to an overemphasis on individual autonomy in CSE in the work of several 'progressive' scholars (cf. Fine, 1998; Elliot 2003; Addison, 2006). These scholars argue for a sexuality education model which views young people as sexually active who have the right to be trained by experts in matters of sexuality to make informed decisions. Rasmussen (2012:703) argues for the importance of young people's 'inner world' in this understanding of adolescent sexuality. For sexuality education to enable youth to make informed decisions, youth must examine and master their internal feelings (Ibid.). Scholars as Lesko (2010) rather point out that CSE promises to produce confident and empowered individuals by overcoming feelings of shame.

Despite CSE's empowering potential, it has been argued having problematic aspects. For example, Lamb (2010) argues that these kinds of hopes for pleasure once again burden young women with the responsibility of 'understanding their bodies' and 'managing their orgasms' may be unrealistic to achieve. She recognizes that "The kind of sexual person who feels pleasure, desire, and subjectivity may be ironically similar to the commodified, sexualized, marketed teen girl that is also problematic for feminism" (Lamb, 2010:296). Fine reminds us that "while the commodification of desire has a long history, it should not be confused with an explicit commitment to sexual freedom for women" (2005:57).

2.1 CSE – Universal Ideal vs. Cultural Sensitivity

Roodsaz (2018) critically discusses transnational CSE initiatives, where CSE initiatives in developing countries can be shaped by powerful transnational and local processes of ‘othering’. She argues that previous research has “pointed to the exclusionary consequences of not recognizing local sexuality politics in transnational sexual health and rights policies and discourses” (Ibid:119). Moreover, the current popularity of CSE in Western European countries and among international agencies has developed a body of literature that looks critically on its implicitly normative underpinnings and as a ‘universality’ (Roodsaz, 2018; Coultas et al., 2020). As part of Western European development aid policy, CSE is increasingly promoted in development countries. SRHR and CSE frameworks are often developed in donor countries and being promoted with a universal promise and supposed to be adapted to a specific sociocultural-targeted context. Roodsaz (2018) criticizes this and points out the potential paradoxical relationship between the implicit universal ideal in SRHR discourse and the cultural sensitivity. Rasmussen (2012) discusses that a ‘secularist logic’ dominates the ‘health-based approach’ present in much Western European sexuality education, which excludes religion from the discussion about sexuality education. She describes that the religion’s role is seen as belonging to the private sphere and located outside collective efforts, such as sexuality education. Including sexual pleasure in CSE might reinforce a ‘secular logic’ through the promotion of autonomy, sexual freedom, and modernity (Rasmussen, 2012). According to Roodsaz (2018), this might point at a work of CSE with an ‘Othering mechanism’, excluding agencies and subjectivities shaped within a religious framework.

2.2 How to Define, Conceptualize and Approach Sexual Pleasure

Since there are various approaches to sexual pleasure, Allen and Carmody (2012:462) aim to re-conceptualize pleasure as a site of possibility. Foucault argues that desire, acts, and pleasure are three key elements to understanding sexual behavior (Rabinow, 1997:268-269). According to Foucault, desire is tied to identity, which can be problematic for those who are not following ‘the norm’, and therefore, pleasure has more potential (Davidson, 2001:211-212). Jagose (2010) problematizes definitions of pleasure as he discusses that sexual pleasure might not necessarily ‘feel good’ (Ibid:531). His discussion moves towards reshaping the notion of pleasure as agentic, where he suggests that “fake orgasm intervenes in the presumption that to

register as political sexual practices must be keyed to productive action, must move things along and make stuff happen” (Ibid:532).

However, making a too narrow definition of sexual pleasure could risk that young people feel they should experience pleasure in a certain way (IPPF, 2016). Exemplifying pleasure with feelings of orgasm is a simplistic notion that privileges certain forms of pleasure over others, which can risk reinforcing systems of oppression (IPPF, 2016:5). Instead, programs should acknowledge that giving and receiving pleasure requires sex partners to reject assumptions.

It is argued that young people lack the language to express their sexual desires in CSE within school-settings (Allen & Carmody, 2012:463). Furthermore, Allen and Carmody (2012:465) describe that what is defined as ‘good sexuality education’ is most often designed and implemented from an educator’s perspective. Therefore, it is important to conceptualize sexual pleasure and sexuality education before implementing processes in practice.

2.3 Defining Key Concepts

The concepts described below describe how pleasure-inclusive CSE is being understood throughout the study. Since the study aims to examine the role of pleasure in CSE based on the view of the research participants, an openness towards these definitions is important to keep throughout the text.

In 2002, WHO organized a *Technical Consultation on Sexual Health* to reaffirm sexual health as an essential aspect of human development (WHO, 2006). The consultation resulted in newly defined working definitions of sexual health, sexual rights, and sexuality. Sexuality is a central aspect in people’s lives, as it ”encompasses sex, gender identities, and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction” (WHO, 2006:5). This definition also states that sexuality is influenced by ”biological phycological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, religious, and spiritual factors” (Ibid:5). Sexual health is ”a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality” (Ibid.). This definition also describes that a sex-positive approach to sexuality and sexual relationships is vital to improving sexual health and ”the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences” (Ibid:5). For sexual health to be attained and maintained, sexual rights must be respected, protected, and fulfilled. Sexual rights protect all people’s rights to express their

sexuality and enjoy sexual health, with a responsibility not to harm the rights of others and within a framework of protection against discrimination (Ibid).

CSE is education delivered in formal and non-formal settings, which provides comprehensive, accurate, evidence-informed, and age-appropriate information on sexuality (UNESCO, 2018:16). Formal CSE includes the opportunities to provide long-term programming of formal curricula in school-settings, where non-formal settings can reach out-of-school youth through community centers, health institutions, online platforms, and faith-based organizations (Ibid:19-20). With a sex-positive approach to CSE, the teaching and learning goes beyond the preventive approach focusing on risks and disease and instead includes positive aspects as love, healthy relationships, and equality (IPPF, 2016). The 'comprehensive' refers to the full range of topics and the long time-frame learners receiving CSE, rather than a single time lesson or intervention (UNESCO, 2018:16). CSE topics may cover cultural and social norms and values, gender equality, non-discrimination, sexual behavior, violence, bodily integrity, and sexual abuse.

Sexual pleasure includes "self-determination, consent, safety, privacy, confidence and the ability to communicate and negotiate sexual relations" as "key enabling factors for pleasure to contribute to sexual health and well-being" (GAB, 2016). This definition from GAB interlink pleasure with sexual health and sexual rights, as it states that pleasure should "be exercised within the context of sexual rights, particularly the rights to equality and non-discrimination, autonomy and bodily integrity, the right to the highest attainable standard of health and freedom of expression" (Ibid.).

3. Theoretical Concepts

The theory of critical pedagogy and institutional perspective will allow the analysis to examine how the proposed inclusion of sexual pleasure in CSE fits the environments where RFSU's partner organizations operate. It informs an in-depth understanding of *how* these challenges are being addressed by the partner organizations and explores the organizational views and aims.

3.1 Critical Pedagogy Theory

With his background as a Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire has had a strong influence on critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2008). *Critical Pedagogy* is a theory that asserts that inequalities related to asymmetrical power relations are central to an analysis of education policies, practices, and curriculum (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2008). It has been argued that critical pedagogy has a direct dialogue with sexuality education since power, relationships, and identities are intrinsic to policy and curricular discussions (Kocsis, 2017:38).

In Freire's (1970) text *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, he discusses that education is key to achieve liberation. He criticizes conventional education, which he claims is embedded within oppressive structures and control students. Freire argues for another type of education, the pedagogy of the oppressed, which is an education constructed by 'the oppressed' based on their lived experience. Namely, Freire's (1970) concept of *problem-posing* is considered an important tool for liberation. This informal educational model allows for the hierarchy between student and teacher to be removed. The students are free to use their knowledge and understanding to think critically and question realities. Problem-posing may seem like a powerful model in teaching sexuality as it moves moral and ethical decision-making beyond the teacher and instead opens the way for students to discover the sexuality topics based on morals and values that are familiar to them.

For Friere (1970), the essence of education is freedom. Within the problem-posing approach, students are free to investigate, discern, and decide based on their interpretation of their values. Using a *dialogic approach*, the teacher can serve as a critical guide and provide factually based information to lead topical discussions while still making an open space for students to discuss their motivations and feelings. Giving students a voice in their development of feelings toward sexuality, rather than engaging in a 'banking model' of delivering what is right and wrong, provides students with the freedom to discover and make grounded decisions about the realities of their world. In praxis, theories are translated to doing, and students can find the path toward their liberation.

The Freirean view of that knowledge can be oppressive when it is constructed by 'outsiders' and that people should create knowledge that makes sense to them based on their own experiences, desires, and norms, is important to understand the oppressive nature of sexuality education programming (Sanjakdar et al., 2015; Kocsis, 2017). The theory of critical

pedagogy is useful when looking at if contradictions exist between RFSU and their partner organizations regarding the inclusion of aspects as pleasure in CSE. It will allow a critical lens on the study results by looking at educational approaches to pleasure-inclusive CSE experienced as challenges and opportunities with CSE implementation and its sensitivity.

3.2 Institutional Perspective

Meyer et al. (1997) claim that modern societies become more alike due to increasing globalization followed by waves of conformity to worldwide models, which has increased after World War II and the subsequent creation of intergovernmental organizations as the UN. Unlike when societies emphasized commitment to a king or religion, people now emphasize their services to their ‘people’ (Ibid: Meyer, 2007). The ‘people’ are committed to collective progress on justice and equality. In this view, human rights and empowerment movements reflect the ideas and organizational participation of dominant liberal societies. It manifests the power of a so-called *world culture* where institutions may form themselves to act in global terms. So do national states and societies where policies reflect global models and standards. These models are often linked to normative notions of a *good society*. Goals outside these global models of the world culture, such as ethnic or religious groups, are usually suspected unless they are strongly linked to collective and individual progress goals. Institutional *isomorphism* is understood as the result of several models used by organizations or people, which are models grounded on Western universalist and individualistic premises (Meyer, 2007). The theoretical argument from this institutional perspective is that the conception of ‘globalization’ is a cultural and institutional process (Meyer, 2007:264). Changes in dominant world models produce changes in national and local ones, and world models pressure the importance of good societies and models. This study is particularly interested in how the research participants deal with pleasure-inclusive CSE and its possible *isomorphic pressures*² of adapting to possible normative assumptions of ‘good models’ of CSE.

The same reasoning of isomorphism concerns educational systems, which Meyer (2007) argues has become globally homogenous. Students can often adapt, without difficulty, to educational systems in different countries despite cultural differences. Educational curriculums are homogenous across diverse cultural contexts, strengthening the power of a world culture based on western standardized models. A problem with adopting external models

² In this study, the term ‘isomorphic pressures’ has been used to describe how RFSU and their partners may plan and conduct CSE activities based on a pressure of adapting to possible dominant global models/universal ideas.

of education that may conflict with local models is that people and institutions on local levels may possess less power to change processes based on their own cultures (Meyer et al., 1997:154). This leads to the concept of *decoupling*, which is the process by which organizations create flexibility by allowing for practices that follow the norms of the external culture that may not conform to their local norms and culture (Meyer et al., 1997:154-155). It is argued that, since world cultures can conflict with local cultures and notions of a good society, it is impossible to fully couple external norms. Therefore, decoupling occurs. While some actors can easily copy global models, such as educational curricular innovations, as they have the resources and organizational capacity to do so, other factors may face difficulties in bringing change ‘in the classroom’ (Ibid.). Instead, actors can symbolically reform educational models through national policies or put global models into planning for future progress. In this view, decoupling occurs as actors are likely to adopt models of a good society that their societies or states cannot live up to.

Meyer et al. (1997) argue that decoupling is “endemic because nation-states are modeled on an external culture that cannot simply be imported wholesale as a fully functioning system” (Ibid:154-155). Even if governments reject a world model, other non-governmental actors embrace this world model and have an aspiration to comply with it (Ibid: Meyer, 2007). In this sense, these world models do not only influence countries at the governmental level but also by the adoption of world culture and norms by non-government actors. Some view decoupling as a neutral or adaptive organizational behavior that helps organizations manage challenging external demands and gives workers the flexibility to respond to individual needs (Moylan and Lindhorst, 2015). The research questions are framed to explore the organizational views and, if decoupling is occurring, how the participants describe the differences between the pleasure-based CSE and actual grassroots-level practices. The institutional perspective allows the study to analyze how individual actors or organizations who advocate for innovations to be adopted consciously benefit from legitimacy to create organizational change (Meyer, 2007; Meyer et al., 1997).

4. Methodology

This chapter presents the methodological choices, including research limitations due to the situation of the Covid-19 pandemic and reflections on ethical concerns.

4.1 Research Design

A qualitative research design guides this study and enables the participants to be at the core of the study and share experiences and perceptions to be explored (Creswell and Poth, 2017). Namely, I have tried to interpret the factors that hinder and facilitate pleasure-inclusive CSE through the eyes of CSE practitioners in development organizations, in light of the understanding that reality is constantly changing and being influenced by the actions of individuals (Ibid; Bryman, 2012). As such, this study is grounded in an interpretivist epistemology and a constructivist ontology (Bryman, 2012:28-33). Information is gained through the interaction between interviewer and participants in an inductive manner to discover something new that is embedded in the social construction of reality (Ibid:24-26). Furthermore, this is a single case study that is understood to enable an understanding of the institutional context as an explanatory factor on the organizational phenomenon under study (Hartley, 2004; Rousseau and Fried, 2001). Single case studies have been criticized as they cannot be transferred into an understanding of a wider phenomenon (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Bryman, 2012:390). However, given the focus on the experiences and perspectives of RFSU and their partner organizations with varied institutional contexts, it aims to explore how a phenomenon works and is connected to its context (Yin, 2014). Therefore, the study is bound in the exploration of challenges and opportunities with pleasure-inclusive CSE within this particular case, with interest in the ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions without assuming pre-determined outcomes (Ibid:66-67). The explorative aim of this study is to enable future research to collect inspiration or insights, even though the external validity of this study is low (Gomm et al., 2000).

4.2 Research Limitations and The Situation During Covid-19 Pandemic

The major limitation that created obstacles throughout the research process was the Covid-19 pandemic. Many researchers have been forced to transition from face-to-face data collection to ‘socially distant’ methods (Lobe, Morgan & Hoffman, 2020). Due to the pandemic, I could not access the environments in which the research participants are based. Therefore, the interviews were conducted online through the virtual platform Zoom. A limitation with online interactions could be that the researcher’s control over interaction decreases (Ibid.). Background noises, depending on where the participants were located during the interview, sometimes decreased

the in-depth focus of the interviews, which would perhaps differ if the interview would be conducted face-to-face. However, the majority of the interviews indicated a value of that the participants could choose the environments they preferred, such as at home or at a café, which created a relaxed atmosphere to discuss the interview questions.

The study intended to interview approximately twelve participants, but the circumstances yielded a smaller sample of eight participants. The situation of having to conduct this study online created some challenges reaching participants through email. Additionally, the time constraints of the data collection period alongside the different work schedules in different time zones of participants constrained the number of interviews this study was able to include. This small sample of participants could have affected the trustworthiness of this study and risk the findings being biased since the participants operate with similar CSE frameworks (Gomm et al., 2000:150). This limitation on the study results may have been different if a larger sample could be used. As one of the characteristics of qualitative research is its possibility of using multiple sources of data (Creswell and Poth, 2017), the interviews were complemented with documentary materials to triangulate the data. There was a lack of access to documentary materials, partly because pleasure-inclusive CSE has not yet been formally implemented by the partner organizations of RFSU, and also since there were several documents only available in local languages. Although some documentary materials have been successfully collected, the interviews comprised the main share of data that was analyzed.

Although the emphasis of this study is to be empirically driven, due to the qualitative nature of the research, this study cannot claim to be objective or completely impartial. One can argue that the semi-structural interview method creates subjectivity because of the risks that the researcher, together with the interviewee, leads the discussion in a certain direction (Bryman, 2012:39-49). As a researcher, I may not have been immune to a subjective interpretation of what the respondents wanted to express; however, I have made efforts to give the participants' perspectives without interfering with my own values where applicable, i.e., in relation to relevant research questions.

4.3 Sampling of Participants

Purposive sampling was used to sample participants strategically as partner organizations to RFSU, working with CSE, and possessing an interest in pleasure-inclusive CSE programming recommendations (Bryman, 2012:418). At the start of the sampling process, the study

identified a gatekeeper from RFSU that supported finding participants suitable within the targeted study population. From email-contact and interviews with RFSU and some of their partner organizations, those participants could easily refer to other people within their working area valuable for the study, which illustrates a *snowballing* sampling technique (Ibid:424). The participants voluntarily shared internal documentary materials after the interviews, which complemented external documents from each organization's website. The documentary data were analyzed together with data from interviews so the themes would emerge across the two sets of data.

The main data is collected from (online) interviews and documentary materials from RFSU in Sweden and their partner organizations. Two of the partner organizations operating on country levels in Georgia and Cambodia, while one of them is operating on a regional level with different countries in Western Hemisphere, Latin America. The data also includes examples from projects in Kenya and Zambia, which they are cooperating with. Since the sampling process had to be totally conducted online, these participants were simply the ones available for this study because of their accessibility. The selection of these partner organizations could be described as the result of a *convenience sampling* (Bryman, 2012:201). The limitation of this sampling strategy is that it is impossible to generalize the findings since the participants collected cannot represent a whole population or country contexts. Since the participants in this study operate in different environments, including different challenges and possibilities with pleasure-inclusive CSE, the findings cannot visualize any common ground or context-specific issues. Rather, an examination of an overall development dilemma can be illustrated between organizational goals and its cultural sensitivity of RFSU and their partner organizations participating in this study. A total of eight interviews were conducted from late November 2020 to February 2021, and their length was around one hour each. Six of the interviews arrives from RFSU and their partner organizations, which was further complemented with two additional CSE expert input, including one in Sweden who has worked with CSE projects/programs with a sex-positive approach and one in England who are currently working with it. As this study seeks to inspire future CSE programming, the differences and similarities of challenges and opportunities in CSE programming found between these institutional settings are essential.³

³ A table of the characteristics of the informants, including documentary materials, can be found in Annex I

4.4 Data Collection Methods

Because of the complexity of the concept of sexual pleasure and CSE, using these two qualitative methods is an attempt for me as a researcher to collect multiple perspectives based on the participants' diverse experiences regarding pleasure-inclusive CSE (Creswell & Poth, 2017:97).

4.4.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

The purpose of using semi-structured interviews is to gain insights into the 'how' and 'what ways' the research participants view CSE and the aspect of sexual pleasure (Bryman, 2012). The semi-structured interview guide enabled the participants to reflect on the research questions wide and open and may provide answers I didn't predict or had in mind before. For the aim to examine the role of sexual pleasure in CSE from RFSU and their partner organizations perspectives, semi-structured interviews were considered appropriate in order to collect in-depth information about the research topic. Before the first interview, a pilot interview discussion was carried out in October with the gatekeeper and two other workers at RFSU. Together we discussed the target group, and the questions were adjusted to create a more natural flow. A semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions was prepared to establish common ground for all interviews. In addition, the interview guide included introductory ice-breaking questions to build a comfortable and relaxed dialogue. The interview guide was structured around the core themes of questions and included probing questions to guide the participants if they deviated⁴.

4.4.2 Desk Review

Apart from the interviews, documentary material was collected, which allow richer data to analyze the topic in depth. Using document analysis combined with the qualitative research method of interviewing will triangulate the data (Bowen, 2009:28). As Eisner (1991) describes, by triangulating data, the researcher attempts to provide "a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility" (Ibid:110). Examining information collected through different methods could help to ensure that the study's findings will not be based on a single method, a single source, or a

⁴ The interview guide can be found in Annex V

single investigator's bias (Bowen, 2009:28). Internal and external documentary material, such as reports, policies, project documents, learning materials, and articles, have been used as empirical data for this study⁵.

4.5 Data Analysis

The data was analyzed in accordance with Graneheim and Lundman's (2004) approach to qualitative content analysis (QCA) and was conducted in light of the theoretical concepts accounted for in chapter three. This approach is useful to describe the participants' views in a legitimate way to find the underlying meaning of their thoughts (Ibid.). In order to analyze the meaning of participants' interviews systematically, the data analysis process followed the subsequent steps described by Graneheim and Lundman (2004);

The transcribed audio-recorded interviews formed the basic unit of analysis being studied. Secondly, the documentary materials were read several times to understand the material and to exclude information that did not link to the topics from the interview transcripts. The third step was to organize the unit of analysis into smaller groups consisting of related aspects and concepts, which formed what Graneheim and Lundman (2004) call 'meaning units'. The meaning units were, after that, condensed into shorter text while preserving the essence of the message. The words from the participants were as much as possible kept in their original form to ensure the study's transparency and legitimacy. This process was followed by the creation of codes uniting various meaning units. The process from condensed meaning units to codes, and codes to form sub-categories and categories, was done with the computer-assisted tool Nvivo 12. This software was helpful to easily define sets of codes and categorize matching codes from the unit of analysis (Yin, 2014; Bryman, 2012). The outputs from this coding and categorization identified meaningful patterns to further analyze. Categories and sub-categories were revisited by re-reading the transcripts and documentary materials several times to ensure all relevant data were included (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004)⁶.

Even if this description of the data analysis process can be perceived as a very linear process, it is important to remember that the nature of the qualitative analysis process involves a 'back and forth' movement (Bryman, 2012:566). Qualitative data analysis is

⁵ Documentary materials used can be found in Annex 1

⁶ The data analysis process is illustrated in Annex III

a *reflexive* process in the way that the raw data, codes, categories, and reasonable explanations emerge, and the process to 'sense making' is flexible (Ibid).

4.6 Ethical Considerations

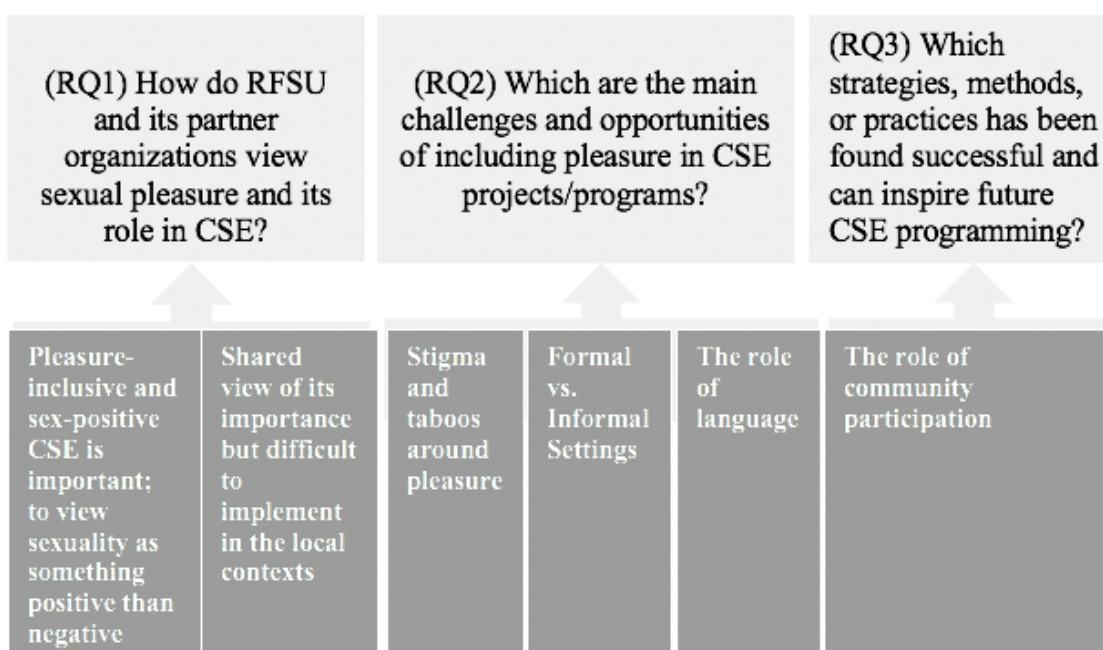
Prior to the start of the interviews, an *informed consent form* was sent out to each interviewee by email⁷. Before the start of each interview, participants had the opportunity to ask questions regarding the consent form. At the very start of the interview session, additional verbal consent to conduct and record was acquired from the participants. Given the sensitivity of sexual pleasure, it was important to highlight that the study only aims to collect information from an institutional view of the topic and not any personal perspectives. In addition, it was crucial to emphasize the anonymity and confidentiality of the information shared. Therefore, the respondents' names and their organizations are mentioned as pseudonyms to remain anonymous throughout the research (Silverman, 2013). The respondents were informed that they could refuse to answer any question if they felt uncomfortable to answer or otherwise did not want to talk about it, and no explanation is needed. Similarly, the respondents had the right to withdraw at any point.

During the data collection process, it has been critical to reflect on the relationship between me as the interviewer and the interviewees (Creswell & Poth, 2017:292). It has been highlighted that the nature of an interview sets up an unequal power dynamic between the interviewer and interviewee (Ibid.). Although the possible unequal power dynamic has been recognized with semi-structured interviews aiming to conduct collaborative interviewing, it is vital to consider a possible subjective lens that may affect the study result's validity and reliability (Patton, 2014).

⁷ An excerpt of the consent form can be found in Annex IV

5. Findings

The data analysis resulted in one overarching theme, which connects six main categories and eleven sub-categories. The overarching theme is; **the role of sexual pleasure in CSE; a *juggle* between organizational desires and its adaptability in local contexts**, which reflects the organizational view on CSE and sexual pleasure, the experiences from RFSU and their partner organizations, including challenges and opportunities regarding the inclusion of pleasure in CSE, and their CSE programming needs. The theme is the connective thread that binds the six categories together.⁸ Category one and two address the first research question, category three to five addresses the second, and category six answer the third research question.



MODEL ON THEMES AND ITS CONNECTION TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The first category, **Pleasure-inclusive and sex-positive CSE is important; to view sexuality as something positive rather than negative**, deals with the view of pleasure based on their professional experiences and how it interlinks with other issues around sexuality, rights, and health. The second category, the **Shared view of its importance but difficult to implement in the local contexts**, addresses the fact that it is rather a strive to implement pleasure-inclusive CSE *in the future* than a reality of the organization's possibilities 'right now'. **Stigma and**

⁸ An analytical model describing the findings can be found in Annex II.

taboos around pleasure are being discussed, including cultural and societal values and norms that could be barriers in pleasure-inclusive CSE implementation. Category four discusses the opportunities and challenges with pleasure-inclusive CSE in **formal versus non-formal settings**. **The role of language** explores the 'framing' around pleasure dialogues and how language can bring both possibilities and challenges in CSE initiatives. The final category discusses the **role of community participation** which describes the importance of including peers and community leaders to increase overall knowledge, awareness, and acceptance, which can impact possibilities in pleasure-inclusive CSE programming.

The findings have been structured according to the identified categories found. In the following section, each category name is shown as a heading. Under each of these headings, the sub-categories are introduced in bold text, and direct quotes from the participants are used to help the reader understand the analysis based on the participant's literal words. The quotes have been complemented with relevant documentary materials from the participants.

5.1 Pleasure-inclusive and sex-positive CSE is important; to view sexuality as something positive rather than negative

The general organizational view of CSE found from the participants was this 'openness' and a strive to move towards a sex-positive approach from the more preventive approach of the topics within CSE. To not only work preventively but based on that sexuality is a positive force in people's lives and that sexuality is very health-promoting; "it is important to not only limit teenage pregnancies or sexual abuse or to see sexuality as something that must be limited and managed, but simply to talk about sexuality as a positive force in people's lives" (*Author translation, P3*).

In line with the view that the previously mentioned 'pleasure enthusiasts' had, that including pleasure in CSE would increase self-esteem, empowerment, and well-being (GAB, 2016; Share-Net International, 2021; Gruskin et al., 2019), the majority of the participants discussed pleasure as an important aspect to include in CSE because of **the links between sexual pleasure and other human rights and health issues**. Moreover, that pleasure-inclusive CSE is important in people's lives, as it supports people on how to make decisions over their sexual health and well-being, as for example;

When you can access information and knowing how to benefit from that information, you feel more empowered and can make informed and responsible decisions (...), and you are not limited just to what you think, that is based on gender norms or these types of things. (P4)

Masculinity norms were also discussed, and specifically the linkage between sexual pleasure and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV);

Women are more expected to say no and find it difficult to say yes, and the opposite for men (...) and it is also not so good for the real well-being and pleasure to feel that 'I must say yes' or that 'I cannot say no.' I would say that men's difficulties in saying no or pressuring to be sexually active or active overall also promote sexual violence. Or the talk about men's sexual drive, it is directly life-threatening. Men who are controlled by their sexual drive. If we then talk about feelings, also about pleasure and well-being, and so on, you can dampen the operation-controlled idea. The idea of men or boys as operation-controlled is directly dangerous because it also makes you absolve yourself of responsibility. (*Author translation, P1*)

In line with this, increased knowledge of sexual pleasure could promote more equal relationships between people; "(...) such as 'I didn't know that this could be felt like this' or 'I didn't know that I could reject', these kinds of things. Like the fact of having consensual relationships" (P4). Pleasure is not only about the physical effects, but the emotional aspects as well;" it is questions like 'how does it feel' if you have not had sex with a partner before, but it can also be questioned as 'how does it feel to be in love' as well" (*Author translation, P1*). It has been argued that pleasure is important to teach young people in their puberty period, as the emotional feelings and physical body development links together; "What about love and feelings? You know this is the desire, and the sexual pleasure is coming first at the first stage of adolescent development (...) the body and feelings development from puberty, that is linked together" (P5). In a wider perspective, it was also discussed that pleasure is related to feeling 'happiness' and within overall well-being in the society; "It is part of public health, you could say. Which also contributes to (...) happier people become kinder people, become kinder local communities" (*Author translation, P7*).

The organizational willingness to work with a sex-positive approach to CSE is also based on the participants' experiences of that **young people desire to learn about sexual pleasure**; "Young people start asking you many questions, like 'is it normal to feel this way?'

or 'why am I so afraid?'" (P4). It was also discussed that young people place fewer taboo values than adults and are actually interested in learning about pleasurable and safe sex;

He was maybe 11 years old, and he was talking about masturbation, and he said, 'masturbation is not harmful, it is something that is good for your body because then we can relax' and then I thought 'Oh, that was new', really! Because there are also many myths about (laughter) masturbation in different countries, in general, it is not something you think is 'good'. It was exciting that these young people and children place so much fewer taboo values than adults. It is something we forget all the time. Young people have a lot of answers in themselves, and you need to create this dialogue space where you can discuss things. That is something we also bring up when we meet with politicians when talking about why sexuality education is important, that we see that young people have questions that no one can answer, and then they search online, of course. (*Author translation, P2*)

5.2 Shared view of its importance but difficult to implement in the local contexts

In general, the view of sexual pleasure in CSE is a matter of course amongst the participants;

It is about the body's health and quality of life. Like sexuality without pleasure, it should be what is questioned or discussed much more than the for me completely integral part, as well as definition where sexuality and pleasure should be the same thing or be completely interconnected. Instead, we talk about pleasure as if it were something separate. But, I mean, sexual health is sexuality with pleasure, because what else is it? Then it is sexuality on someone else's terms. (*Author translation, P3*)

However, none of the partner organizations have actually succeeded in including the aspect of sexual pleasure in their CSE curriculums. When asking the respondents if they are currently including sexual pleasure in their CSE, the common answer was, **"We are far from these topics, unfortunately"** (P6). One of the participants described that it had been a challenge even to include CSE curriculums in schools, which makes it even more difficult to start working on the topic of sexual pleasure;

We collaborate with the ministry of education and the school department, and they said 'ok we will try it out' (...) and since they agreed in 2010, we started to develop the curriculum on sexual

and reproductive health, that we call ‘life skills education on sexual and reproductive health’ or ‘life skills education on CSE’. When we integrate the sexual and reproductive rights in the books, the majority introduced in books are reproductive health organs, not sexual (...) it is very sensitive, and the government does not allow us to share the outside organs, only the inside of the body organs. (P5)

The results show that there is a common view among the participants that they **strive to implement pleasure-inclusive CSE in the future**; ”In the next year, we will try to put some more sexuality topics including emotions regarding sexuality in the curricula’s on secondary levels, we will try” (P6). The common mentioned future goal was that “all youth receive the kind of education they need about their bodies, sexuality, and relationships. Sexuality education is not just about sex, it is about relationships, desire, and those things!” (*Author translation*, P2).

In 2019, a declaration on sexual pleasure was developed (WAS, 2019). It states the importance of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences that it is essential in sexual health and well-being for all (Ibid.). The view of the participants viewed was that this declaration might make it possible for organizations to include pleasure in formal CSE curriculums in the future (P4; P8). For example;

The declaration has come to bring us a lot of opportunities. I would say that there is like a ‘before’ and an ‘after’ the declaration. Like now, I think it is more visible in the region to see people talking about sexual pleasure than before. (P4)

5.3 Stigma and taboos around pleasure

The results indicate that sexual pleasure is a very complex topic to teach and include in CSE because of barriers **from culture and societal values shaping individual values and how we act**;

It is a topic that recently been brought up from feminist movements, but there are many strong cultural values embedded in our societies that do not allow us to talk about sexual pleasure openly (P4)

Moreover, the participants reflected on that cultures are constantly changing, and it is a need to take cultural differences into consideration;

Across values from society, culture, and then individual and personal feelings also linked together with their personal values (...) you cannot act or illustrate, because you have values influenced by the society. You feel happy when you feel desire, but you act differently from one society to another (...) communities have beliefs and cultural differences, and that is a barrier. We have to reflect on culture and look to biological things in terms of physiology function. Then we let young people understand, and the culture is constantly changing. (P5)

The participants stated that working pleasure-inclusive and with a sex-positive approach to young people's sexuality is a challenge in societies where it is a fear that **pleasure-inclusive CSE will promote young people to have sex from an early age**, as for example;

They were still involved in norming in terms of 'wait' or this very traditional view that 'boys are dangerous' and 'girls do not want' or whatever it is (...), and then, in reality, women were often abused, of course. But that is more about bias in gender and power rather than the view of sex, I would say. (*Author translation, P7*)

Some parents are reluctant to let their children learn about certain SRHR issues, as sexual pleasure, emotions, abortion, and masturbation, as they believe that the children would try 'pre-marital sex' (P5 document). A common misperception is that CSE will inspire youth to be sexually active (RFSU, 2019b). Moreover, there is an assumption that withholding information from children will postpone sexual activity;

The stigmas are huge, so the big fear is that if you talk about pleasure, it will create a lot more unsafe sex or, it is kind of an assumption that it has to be held back (...) which is a kind of false idea, the evidence shows us that more sexuality education at a younger age actually lead to that people takes more responsible decisions, they delay their first sexual experiences. (P8)

As the quote indicates, UNESCO (2018) also state that young people who have accessed CSE have safer sex and may be more confident to wait or choose when to have sex for the first time.

The **societal barriers in pleasure-inclusive CSE implementation** have been highlighted overall. For instance, the topic of sexual pleasure and the societal taboos around it can actually even hinder the incorporation of CSE in schools;

Sexual pleasure is a very important area of CSE. But you know, the barrier issue why they are not allowing CSE in schools is the teaching of pleasure. So, without sexual pleasure, I hope that the government of every country may accept it. In a Christian country, or Muslim or even Buddhism, it is not really easy to integrate this. (P5)

The results show that cultural and societal values around sex and sexuality hinder the organizations from succeeding to provide CSE in formal settings, as in Georgia where CSE in the General Education System is going under the name 'healthy life skills education' and include topics around citizenship and biology rather than sex-positivity, pleasure, and desire (P6 document). Apart from barriers faced by governments, the barriers with CSE implementation do also come from parents and guardians. There are some beliefs that sensitive topics and SRHR issues cannot be discussed in public, and SRHR is considered private and 'adult' stuff' (P5 document).

5.4 Formal versus Informal Settings

The opportunities and challenges with pleasure-inclusive CSE has been discussed to be about whether the students feel they receive sexuality education in a safe environment or not;

I think that it is perhaps most important with sex education to be safe, that you receive it on your own terms where formal settings, in schools, do not always have to be the right way to go about it. The informal CSE can take forms in so many different ways. (*Author translation, P7*)

The participants described that there are significant differences in the opportunities and challenges with sex-positive and pleasure-based CSE in formal vs. informal settings (P1; P5; P4; P6). Formal settings would be the CSE in schools, and often the CSE curriculums agreed upon by the government. Informal settings are rather outside schools usually provided by NGOs in the forms of discussions, trainings, and workshops for children, youth, adolescents, parents, teachers, and community leaders. In informal settings, children and youth can volunteer in another way than if it would be provided in school-settings for example;

Outside school, it is usually much easier. Because then there is also some kind of volunteering. You should have the opportunity to give up, and there must be that freedom, of course. Then it is easier to do this, like 'now we will do this' and 'are you in it or not' and then you investigate

it. In school, there you have compulsory schooling, and everyone is there. As a teacher, I have a different power, which means that you have to be a bit more careful because people also have different backgrounds. (*Author translation, P1*)

When it comes to providing CSE in formal settings, the informants highlighted the **importance of training of trainers** (TOT). This means that teachers get trained in the topics included in the curricula to feel safe, comfortable, and secure in sharing the knowledge within their own settings of local norms, values, and views on sex and sexuality (P5 document). This is one example of the interview discussions;

I actually think that RFSU's requirement to have more focus on teacher education is important. Because I believe that even if there are things in the curriculum, it is still the case that there are individuals who will stand there and be like educators in this room, and it is usually teachers then who will do it. So, I understand that perhaps it will just be these questions that are just about prevention and maybe not like 'what are the most pleasurable places for a girl' or 'which positions are good to try when exploring your sexuality' or 'how to masturbate'. I don't think there are many teachers who feel comfortable talking about this, or how girls' vaginas or boys' snobs look like (...), then everything that is about the desire and the positive part can probably just disappear when you become so prevention-oriented. (*Author translation, P7*)

However, the discussions in the interviews tended to move towards the observation that there are **more opportunities for pleasure-inclusive CSE in informal settings** rather than formal settings. It allows them to be able to teach taboo topics, particularly when although governments are against it;

It is easier in informal settings. In formal settings, it depends very much on the teachers, and most teachers can be older people as, for example, in Georgia, they cannot even say the word 'sex'. So, from what I have seen, you could explore and dig into desire and pleasure mostly informal, for example, when our partner organizations have had youth groups or youth clinics (...) because our partner organizations working with family planning so many have such opportunities for young people to gather. They developed 'trainings' for example, courses for young people when they sit in a circle and discuss and as the same as we have in Sweden, value exercises for example. (*Author translation, P2*)

It has been found that providing CSE in informal settings, as outside schools and formal curriculums, could reach a much broader audience, despite the social and cultural taboos around sexual pleasure in many of the communities RFSU operates;

We have a partner organization in Ghana, which was from the beginning a blog called 'adventures from the bedrooms of African women', and just such a name is very cool! The founders of that blog, two women, told me that they started the blog, and they write very explicitly. They write about desire quite unique. It has readers available all over the continent in Africa but also abroad because it is in English. When they met, they realized that they like to talk about sex with other women and that they would like to investigate more into what it means for women because there was so little information out there when it comes to female pleasure. (*Author translation, P2*)

The blog started in 2009 by two women, aiming to create space for African Women to share experiences of sex and diverse sexualities (RFSU, 2017b). It shows on a strive to improve the knowledge of sex and sexuality in the communities and to increase pleasurable and safer sex;

It is our hope that the blog provides a safe space where African women can openly discuss a variety of sex and sexuality issues with the intention of learning from each other, having pleasurable and safer sex, and encouraging continuous sexuality education for adults. (*direct quote, Adventures from, n.d.*)

Another example of pleasure activist in informal settings is the podcast *The Spread* in Kenya, which RFSU also supports because of the founder Kaz's efforts to increase knowledge in topics as sexual pleasure (RFSU, 2019c). This podcast "talks about masturbation when no one else dares" (*Author translation, Ibid.*), however, with the negative consequences of her receiving some death threats and hatred (*Ibid.*). This indicates a belief that pleasure-inclusive CSE is highly important for people's well-being, even though it is not a welcomed topic of discussion in society at large. In an interview (Böhm, 2019), the podcast creator 'Kaz' described the importance of sex-positive sexuality education in Kenya in order to that "people should become comfortable with their sexuality, and especially with talking about it with others" (cited in Böhm, 2018). The biggest challenge faced has been the opposition from the government (*Ibid.*). The government wants to censor everything online and is considering a change in the law that would involve high licensing fees from those who produce content on the Internet, which could limit this podcast's informal sexuality knowledge sharing.

5.5 The role of language

The majority of the participants brought up the challenge that they **don't have a vocabulary around sex-positive aspects and pleasure to lean on** when teaching about sexuality in contexts where there are strong taboos around it. This is an example of one of these reflections;

I know I met a woman I worked with quite a lot in Zambia, and she said partly that 'we have never had the language for sexual words, a vocabulary, so I was not able to help my daughter'. Her experience of sex was that her man came home and said such as 'bend over', and then he got an orgasm, and then it was done. So, I think like this, what is the entrance then? How do you start talking about sexual pleasure just like that anyway? (*Author translation, P7*)

The 'common language' used in CSE will differ from country to country, as well as between private sphere and at a technical workshop, as for example;

Often you find that there are words that people use, but they might not be the ones that they feel comfortable using at technical workshops and those things. You have to be careful that there are not words that people can find offensive. There is one word in the UK, 'cunt', which many women might use and feel comfortable using, like 'I love my cunt' and which means vagina, where other people might call it another thing. But I think if you then want to flip-chart and say 'what words do you use' and I think there is a kind of barrier between using the words you use in your relationship or what you might say in a technical workshop. (P8)

Although sexual pleasure might seem to be impossible to talk about in some contexts, it has been argued that **through re-thinking about how to 'frame' the topic of pleasure**, one might enable its inclusion anyways;

I think that you do not need to put the heading 'now we should talk pleasure' but to include it in how we talk about the body, reproductivity, and the right to say yes and say no, to use the type of vocabulary where you can use the word pleasure or desire. If you cannot use the word pleasure, you can use the formulation of 'how can it feel good' or 'how can it feel good inside', or 'how does it feel against the other', you can use that vocabulary. Although I think it is important to know that the clitoris is an important part of pleasure because that is the function it has as well,

that one is not just talking about the physical pleasure but the well-being (...) It is actually also about feeling safe with oneself and other people. (*Author translation, P1*)

5.6 The role of community participation

The most effective strategy found by the participants in on which ways to work with pleasure based CSE when facing a lot of barriers in the society is to **invite parents, community, and religious leaders in the dialogues to increase overall knowledge and awareness on the importance of sex-positivity and pleasure-inclusive CSE;**

We are inviting duty bearers, parents and representatives, to attend workshops, and then we are presenting the sensitive sexuality topic and let parents understand why we introduce sexuality to young people. You know what they say? They say that when we invite them to join, some feel angry because they think like ‘why introducing sexuality in school’ and that young should not learn that. After we had group discussions and had a role play, they started to open up like ‘ok, it is really important’. First, they thought that when talking about sexuality education (...), they just referred to sexual intercourse. They did not know that sexuality has a lot of, you know, it is a cross-cutting issue. (P5)

In Cambodia, for example, open discussions on SRHR have been socially, culturally, and traditionally discouraged (P5 document). It has been found that a successful way to address these barriers is to work with the entire chain of stakeholders; youth, parents, communities, and government officials. When conducting ‘sensitization workshops’ with stakeholders on CSE, it has been observed that most participants were interested in some of the topics of CSE, especially sexuality, sexual orientation, and behaviors (Ibid.). To include stakeholders in knowledge-sharing activities on CSE also enables an environment to correct misconceptions of sexual behavior and its consequences and could successfully increase an understanding of the importance of CSE for children and youth (Ibid.).

To be able to know how to define and talk about pleasure in different cultures and societies, there is a great need to gather evidence-based information on the topics around sexual pleasure (P4). The Pleasure Project has highlighted ‘best practices’ from NGO’s who successfully worked with pleasure-based CSE in religious and culturally conservative environments (The Pleasure Project, 2008:50-53). For example, a program in Mozambique called *Vida Positiva* has been advocating trainers in local churches, including Catholic

Churches, to teach couples about better and pleasurable sex (Ibid.). These examples of 'best practices' were also highlighted among some of the participants, as for example;

There is also one example in South Africa, it is faith-based communities who have decided to take a pleasure-focused approach. So, they focused on the importance of being aware of the needs of your partner, kind of making your sex-life fun and pleasurable, varied. So, the nuns and the priests would talk about that. (P8)

Trainers in *Vida Positiva* explain the importance that Church members would talk more openly about sex among married couples, that sex and pleasure is not a threat to culture, religion, or people's sensibilities (The Pleasure Project, 2008:50-53). This is argued as a successful method to enable the first step of a pleasure-inclusive CSE initiative; sex is so linked to marriage, which most religions promote, which often puts women at increased risk of contracting HIV and SGBV (Ibid:50), as highlighted in the interviews as well;

Sexuality is so associated with morality in society. There are religious taboos around it that sexuality so much belongs in marriage still in almost all societies (...) and then it becomes so important to also wait to have sex. (Author translation, P1)

5.7 Conclusion of Findings

In relation to the first research question, the overall findings show that the role of sexual pleasure in CSE is a matter of course among the interviewees and that their organizational future goals include a strive to implement pleasure-inclusive CSE. According to the interviewees, knowledge of sexual pleasure is important to increase people's overall well-being, as it leads to increased decision-making power, self-esteem, equal relationships, love, happiness, positive challenges to masculinity norms, and a decrease in harmful norms and SGBV. However, none of the partner organizations have been able to implement pleasure-inclusive CSE yet. According to the participants, young people themselves are interested to learn about sexual pleasure and youth place much fewer taboo values around it than adults. The main challenges found with pleasure-inclusive CSE implementation were shown to be cultural barriers, including taboos around pleasure, masturbation, and sex-positivity. This answers the second research question. Norms that are barriers for pleasure-inclusive CSE implementations are traditional views that information about pleasure will promote young people to have sex

from a too early age or 'pre-marital sex'. The participants have found ways to undergo these barriers, where knowledge sharing of pleasure could have more possibilities in informal settings rather than formal ones. The importance of ToT has also been highlighted, as it is usually adults and teachers who need to feel more comfortable in sharing the knowledge within their own settings of local views on sex and sexuality. This could enable an increased focus on sex-positive topics even in formal settings. By 'framing' the language around pleasure so it fits in the institutional contexts could be one 'first step' of pleasure-inclusive CSE initiatives and curriculums. Regarding the third research question, the main opportunities with pleasure-inclusive CSE implementation in contexts where pleasure might be very stigmatized were found to be within informal settings, and specifically regarding the involvement of peers, cultural and religious leaders.

The general findings of this study suggest that *the role of sexual pleasure in CSE is a juggle between organizational desires and its adaptability in local contexts*. This is because the organizations share a notion on pleasure-inclusive CSE as important to achieving improved sexual well-being, but they face challenges for its implementation because of local resistance. When governments do not allow for sex-positivity to be included in formal CSE curriculums, and communities face a lot of hesitation to these issues, the organizations need to find ways to 'bypass' this. There are some ways to do this, such as through non-formal settings, involvement of relevant stakeholders, and to 're-frame' the language around pleasure, which though might in a way ignore cultural and social values around. Therefore, this 'juggle'.

6. Discussion: Insights from Institutional Perspective & Critical Pedagogy

Despite this and RFSU's international goal of including sexual pleasure in CSE, no partner organizations outside of Sweden have succeeded in including pleasure in formal CSE contexts. It is a shared vision to provide pleasure-inclusive CSE among the participants. However, it is currently challenging to go beyond preventive sexuality education due to societal, political, and cultural barriers. One perspective could be that since pleasure-inclusive CSE does not match the local environments in which the partner organizations operate, the shared notion of the importance of pleasure could be understood within Meyer's concepts of *world culture* and *isomorphism* (Meyer, 2007). Even though these are my *own* interpretations of the

empirical material, RFSU's shared notion of the importance of teaching sex-positive topics as pleasure could indicate that the external environment has influenced them. If so, one view is that the model of a 'good society' or in this case specifically 'a good CSE model' has been developed partly by the previous mentioned 'pleasure enthusiasts' (GAB, 2016; IPPF, 2016; UNESCO, 2018; Pleasure Project, 2021), which all are organizations with a western cultural background. The fact that RFSU's partner organizations find it very challenging to teach about sexual pleasure in environments that are not western feminist cultures could visualize an example of that this 'world model' of a good CSE curriculum might be influenced by what Roodsaz (2018) define as the 'Other mechanism'.

So, who are the 'others' in this view? One perspective on this could be that the 'others' are RFSU based in Sweden who, through the shared global norm on sex-positivity with the other 'pleasure enthusiasts', influence their partner organizations to legitimate their operations by following this norm, indicating the 'right' ways of improving young people's sexual health, rights, and well-being. When RFSU's partner organizations then successfully teach about sexual pleasure in CSE interventions despite the cultural, societal, and political barriers on local levels, these CSE practitioners could risk implementing what Freire (1970) mentions as 'oppressive' CSE. This because the CSE practitioners as the 'outsiders' might not follow local norms and values in their teaching of chosen CSE topics, which could risk that young people are not able to create knowledge that makes sense to them based on their own experiences, desires, and norms (Ibid.). On the other hand, the 'others' from Roodsaz's (2018) perspective could as well point at RFSU in Sweden and their partner organizations together because of their shared view on the importance of pleasure-inclusive CSE and strive to change local norms regarding this topic. One interpretation of this could be that RFSU's partner organizations might be a part of the 'isomorphic pressure' (Meyer, 2007) together with the other 'pleasure enthusiasts' and influence policies and regulations in the settings in which they operate to copy the norm of sex-positivism and pleasure inclusiveness. However, since sexual pleasure overall is a very sensitive topic, even in western countries, it might not be argued to be a strong norm within the 'world culture', although some 'pleasure enthusiasts' advocate for pleasure-inclusive CSE. So, do RFSU's partner organizations advocate and influence for including pleasure in CSE based on an 'isomorphic pressure' to keep their operations legitimate in the possible norm of pleasure inclusiveness in international guidelines and actors and/or only in according to RFSU? The shared view of the importance of pleasure in CSE might reinforce Roodsaz's (2018) argument that there is a paradoxical relationship between the implicit universal ideal in CSE and the cultural sensitivity, as RFSU's international goal to include

pleasure in CSE may not take cultural sensitivity in consideration. In light of Meyer's (2007) institutional perspective, this may suggest a 'decoupled' relationship between RFSU's organizational desires of including pleasure in CSE programs/projects and the institutional setting of the partner organizations, which does not allow such sensitive topics.

When the partner organizations of RFSU 'decouple', they maintain the gap between external norms and its inconsistency with local culture and values, which could leave us wondering *why*. It could be that this decoupling enables the partner organizations to gain legitimacy with their external members, as the relationship with RFSU and other international cooperation's and program/project funders. At the same time, they still retain the autonomy to structure their operations in ways that deviate from the legitimized practices. By allowing RFSU's international strategy and its goal to implement pleasure-inclusive CSE, they keep their organization legitimate by following the shared notion of the importance of sex-positivity and the role of sexual pleasure in young people's sexual health, rights, and well-being. Still, they have the power to structure their operations in providing CSE in accordance with local structures and norms. The participants brought up that sex-positive CSE is not allowed by the government, and to implement formal CSE in school-settings, they need to remove the sex-positive topics as pleasure (P5) can visualize this decoupled relationship. Still, their shared aim to work towards implementing pleasure-inclusive CSE in the future may show how to 'decouple' this sensitive topic, as with small steps allow for pleasure inclusiveness in accordance with local values and structures.

6.1 The opportunity to 'bypass' decoupling

The research findings indicate the opportunities to provide pleasure-inclusive CSE within informal settings, specifically the involvement of peers, community, and religious leaders, which may indicate something else than 'decoupling'. The partner organizations have found a way to teach about sexual pleasure and at the same time not conflict with cultural or religious norms and values. To share knowledge of sexual pleasure through blogs and podcasts from Ghana and Kenya (Adventures from, n.d.; Böhm, 2018) creates a possibility with providing safe environments for pleasure-inclusive knowledge sharing in informal settings, where community and religious leaders can be used to promote the agenda of the organizations. In light of institutional perspective, this approach is interesting hence the opportunities found with pleasure-inclusive CSE within informal settings, specifically the involvement of peers, cultural

and religious leaders, may indicate that the organizations have found a way to 'bypass' the decoupled relationship between organizational desires and country settings with cultural barriers (Meyer et al., 1997).

Roodsaz (2018) reminds us that CSE is often developed in donor countries and is supposed to be adapted to a specific sociocultural-targeted context and often excludes agencies shaped within a religious framework. The example of 'bypass' the decoupled relationship may also act as one step to move away from this 'Othering mechanism' (Ibid.). This because if we strive to organize an honest conversation about sexuality education, then collective concerns and local models of sexuality knowledge and politics need to be included rather than excluded or 'othered' concerning the 'universal' ideas (Ibid.). An analysis of this is that such an approach requires an in-depth understanding and probing of the existing local discourses on issues of sexuality, which RFSU's partner organizations found a way of doing by the involvement of the community and religious leaders.

Within what I call a 'bypass' approach would rather enable practitioners to 'couple' rather than decouple the organizational aim with pleasure-inclusive CSE with its cultural and societal sensitivity with local institutional frameworks. In light of Freire's (1970) lens on non-oppressive pedagogy, the culturally sensitive topic of sexual pleasure is within this approach *filtered* through the language of local institutions and might thereby make sense to people on local levels. To 'frame' the wordings and 'how to talk' around the culturally sensitive topic of sexual pleasure towards a language that is more consistent with culture and religions could open the way for students to reach their individual and familiar morals and values regarding this topic. This approach may be similar to 'problem-posing' as discussed by Freire (1970), as the involvement of community leaders can in some sense 'liberate' the local population from the language of enjoyment that can risk negative feelings. However, the concept of 'problem posing' though also focuses on how the hierarchy between student and teacher can be removed, which might not be the case if the students themselves find the sex-positive topics as pleasure offensive and sensitive. Since the study does not include data collection in direct contact with young people, it cannot answer how young people perceive and experience CSE practices. Instead, these findings provide the CSE practitioners' and teachers' perspectives on how their students may perceive pleasure-inclusive CSE.

6.2 Framing the vocabulary around pleasure to enable CSE of the oppressed

According to the research participants, to ‘frame’ the language around sexual pleasure was an effective method for teachers to guide the students and provide factually based information that leads to topical discussions but still keep an open safe space for students to discuss their feelings. This is how Freire (1970) describes a ‘dialogic approach’ to pedagogies, which can give students a voice in their development of feelings towards sexuality grounded in their own values and realities, rather than forcing them with a ‘universal’ model of pleasure based CSE (Ibid.; Roodsaz, 2018). A dialogic approach to pedagogies of pleasure could seem to be important because that “you have to be careful that there are not words that people can find offensive” (P8). By re-thinking of how to ‘frame’ sexual pleasure, as cited examples from the participants, “how can it feel good against the other” (P1), can provide freedom for the students to discover and decide about their sexualities in their own realities by using familiar words.

Allen and Carmody (2012) argue that what is often described as ‘good sexuality education’ is designed and implemented from an educator’s perspective. This could be understood within ‘theory of the oppressed’ (Freire, 1970) that CSE is embedded within oppressive structures and control students and is not a ‘pedagogy of the oppressed’ since it is constructed by teachers and does not always include the perspectives of the students themselves. However, the study results show that young people themselves desire knowledge on sexual pleasure and sex-positive CSE, as the taboos around pleasure usually come from adult values where while young people feel much less taboo around the topic. To allow for pleasure-inclusive CSE practices in informal settings as a continued discussion based on children and young people’s own questions might get closer to a pedagogy of the oppressed. As previously mentioned, these findings do not provide an honest voice of the children and youth themselves, but the participants’ experiences of meeting their CSE target population. Suppose RFSU and their partner organizations would implement pleasure-inclusive CSE without the support of young people themselves. In that case, it could move towards an ‘oppressive’ knowledge sharing where the moral and ethical decision of teaching certain topics derive from the teacher, perhaps influenced by a ‘world model’ on which topics CSE should entail (Freire, 1970; Meyer, 2007). In this perspective, by not *forcing* pedagogies of pleasure on children and youth and instead allowing a process that moves towards what Freire (1970) calls a ‘problem-posing approach’ could enable students to be free to investigate and decide over their education based on their own values. To ‘catch’ the questions around sexual pleasure

that comes from children and youth themselves and continue the conversation could thus be an example of meeting the children and youths' desires to learn about sexual pleasure without interfering with their own values.

6.3 Conclusion: Lessons Learned

The empirical results from this study indicate a shared notion that sexual pleasure links to various aspects related to sexuality, such as psychosocial development, love and emotional feelings (P5) and masculinity norms, and SGBV (P1). This is similar to some of the views from the 'pleasure enthusiasts' presented in chapter one, and some scholars presented in chapter two. Sexual pleasure is simply seen as a vital component in SRH and CSE programs/projects to promote overall well-being. This answers the research question one, *How do RFSU and its partner organizations view sexual pleasure and its role in CSE?*, moreover, the sub-question stating *How does the promotion of sexual pleasure fits with the local environments in which the research participants operate?*, enabled a more critical analysis of the first question. In this case, cultural barriers are understood as a major problem in pleasure-inclusive CSE implementation. The shared view of pleasure but difficulty implementing might visualize that it benefits in cultures with feminist norms and values rather than taking different cultures into consideration. In light of the institutional perspective, this suggests a decoupled relationship between the wishes of the CSE practitioners working with these issues and the institutional setting of the countries in which they operate. Examples of 'best practices' and recommendations for providing pleasure-inclusive CSE gained from this study visualizes how these projects and organizations have been able to bypass the 'decoupled' relationship between organizational wishes and the institutional settings of the countries.

In conclusion, the significance of sexual pleasure is somehow *filtered* through the language of local institutions, such as religious leaders. It thereby makes sense to the people on grassroots levels, at least according to the informants. One analysis of this is that the partner organizations are moving from a kind of 'oppressed' pedagogy where they may not take cultural values into consideration in including pleasure in their pedagogies to a non-oppressive pedagogy with instead *including* community stakeholders. Following this, the answer to research question two, *Which are the main challenges and opportunities to include pleasure in CSE projects/programs?*, do highlight a paradoxical relationship between organizations aims

and institutional settings, though also a possibility to 'bypass' this issue with *filtering* the pleasure vocabulary through religious institutions.

This also leads us to research question three, *Which strategies, methods, or practices have been found successful and can inspire future CSE programming?*. The results show that the main opportunities for RFSU's partner organizations to implement pleasure-inclusive CSE lies in the sphere of informal settings. To involve a broad chain of stakeholders as youth, parents, communities, and government officials for knowledge sharing workshops on sex-positivity and sexual pleasure enables an environment to correct misconceptions of sexual behavior and its consequences and has been argued as a successful 'first step' for pleasure-inclusive CSE programming. Adding to this, re-thinking how to 'frame' the topic of pleasure might enable its inclusion, even when the topic could be culturally sensitive. This suggests that potential exists to concretize critical pedagogy in CSE programs. The CSE curriculums that currently embody politically driven and socially controlled interpretation of sexual knowledge and behavior can benefit from embracing the discourses of critical pedagogy. The change of pedagogical approach to 'talk around' the word pleasure but still about pleasure, as well as an increased focus on student's voices, may also help shift the view of the teacher as a holder-of-knowledge and in control and thus reposition teachers' roles from deploying traditional teaching methods to creators of new forms of learning.

6.4 Concluding Remarks on the critical lens on pleasure-inclusive CSE

The findings found from interviews and documentary materials of RFSU and their partner organizations with its critical lens through this analysis by using Freire (1970) and Meyer (2007) indicate both the importance of including sexual pleasure in CSE and the importance of assuring a culturally relevant CSE. Framing CSE in light of the critical theoretical tradition by Freire can provide opportunities to deconstruct oppressive structures, or be viewed as ideas from 'the others' (Roodsaz, 2018), shaping the CSE curriculums of RFSU's partner organizations and instead develop a greater student voice. Promoting students' voices has been found important to challenge dominant assumptions that young people's lives are driven by sexual desires and instead reformulate a language of sexuality that is not primarily concentrated on preventing risk and disease and reproduction. A critical focus on sexuality education is not only important in supporting youth to successfully manage their sexuality based on their own realities but also to discover new forms of knowledge and understandings about sexuality

education in different institutional settings. This research result indicates that social and cultural context plays a role in shaping sexual values. Such new forms of knowledge and understandings are important. Finding ways to replace the more preventive approach in sexuality education with a sex-positive and pleasure-inclusive approach to sexuality education that generates broad questions about the individual and society and equality/inequality will enable teachers to promote analytical- and critical reflections. Freire calls this “the posing of the problems of human beings in their relations with the world” (1970:79). However, the findings also illustrate that ‘global others’ are imagined as receiving ‘the good’ or ‘the right’ CSE models. In re-thinking of cultural relevance calls for CSE to shift away from guiding individuals to the western ‘good CSE model’ and instead support young people to critically analyze the injustices that structure young people’s lives, but also involves CSE-providing institutions in these unequal structures. By avoiding approaching the specific and varied meanings of sexuality among different individuals in modern discourses of sexuality may contribute to a failure to appreciate sexuality across diverse cultural contexts (Sanjakdar et al., 2015).

6.5 Implications for future research

When conducting this study, I’ve noted a lack of research exploring the challenges and possibilities with pleasure-inclusive CSE focusing on the perspectives from societies where pleasure is culturally sensitive, taboo, and sometimes viewed as an impossible aspect to include in CSE. Therefore, future studies would find value in exploring the role and the realities of pleasure-inclusive CSE in different contexts. Although this study highlighted examples of pleasure-inclusive and sex-positive CSE programming from different country settings, the aim was not to explore the specific challenges and opportunities with including sexual pleasure in sexuality education within a specific country setting. Rather, by critically analyze RFSU’s international goal to work with pleasure in collaboration with their partner organizations, this study cautions against the taken-for-granted assumption that ‘world models’ can always be implemented easily and evidently without consideration to context-specific settings. The theoretical and organizational arguments that pleasure should be included in CSE to increase sexual well-being did agree with the empirical findings gained from this study. Therefore, future research would benefit from digging deeper into how pleasure links to other SRHR- and CSE aspects and critically analyze the role of sexual pleasure in young people’s lives

politically, culturally, socially, and emotionally. This to create a more comprehensive understanding of the role of sexual pleasure in CSE. However, this study also problematizes the effects of this ‘decoupled’ relationship between organizational goals and the institutional settings of the countries where pleasure is highly culturally sensitive has from the perspective of ‘world culture’ and isomorphism. Lastly, concerning Roodsaz (2018) argument that CSE is mostly discussed and developed by ‘the others’ and to Freire’s (1970) argument of increasing students voices in CSE dialogues, a recommendation of further research is to investigate this topic in direct contact to young people and collect information about the issue based on their own realities and experiences.

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Internal documents (No external access)

P5 document. (N.d.) *Three years CSE report*. (internal document, anonymous)

P6 document (N.d.) *Overview of 'healthy life skills education' topics in school-settings*. (internal document, anonymous)

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Annexes

Annex I: Characteristics of the informants

Participant	Type of organization	Country
P1	RFSU	Sweden
P2	RFSU	Sweden
P3	RFSU	Sweden
P4	RFSU's partner organization	West Hemisphere, Latin America
P5	RFSU's partner organization	Cambodia
P6	RFSU's partner organization	Georgia
P7	CSE expert/former RFSU staff	Sweden
P8	Pleasure Project (CSE & Pleasure expert)	England

Documentary Materials from the participants

P5 document. (N.d.)	Three years CSE report
P6 document. (N.d.)	Overview of 'healthy life skills education' topics in school-settings
RFSU (2019a)	Position Paper – Sexual Rights
RFSU (2019b)	Position Paper – CSE
RFSU (2015)	RFSU's International Programme Strategy 2015-2022
RFSU (2019c)	Website
RFSU (2017a)	Website
RFSU (2017b)	Website
The Pleasure Project (2008)	Report
WAS (2019)	Declaration on sexual pleasure
Böhm (2018)	Interview Article (Ottar)
Adventures from (N.d.)	Website

Annex II: Analytical model describing findings of a qualitative case study of RFSU and their partner organizations

Theme	Category	Sub-category
The role of pleasure in CSE: a juggle between organizational desires and its adaptability in local contexts	RQ 1: Pleasure-inclusive and sex-positive CSE is important; to view sexuality as something positive rather than negative	The links between sexual pleasure and other human rights and health issues
		Young people's own wishes to learn about their psychosexual development including sexual pleasure
	RQ 1: Shared view of its importance but difficult to implement in the local contexts	We are far from these topics unfortunately
		Strive to implement pleasure-inclusive CSE <i>in the future</i>
	RQ 2: Stigma and taboos around pleasure	Cultural and societal values shaping individual values and how we act
		Pleasure-inclusive CSE will promote young people to have sex from early age
		Societal barriers in pleasure-inclusive CSE implementation
	RQ 2: Formal vs Informal Settings	More opportunities for pleasure-inclusive CSE in informal settings
		The importance of Training of trainers
	RQ 2: the role of language	We don't have a vocabulary around sex-positive aspects and pleasure to lean on
		Through re-thinking about how to 'frame' the topic of pleasure.
	RQ 3: The role of community participation	By inviting parents, community and religious leaders in the dialogues increase overall knowledge and awareness on the importance of sex-positivity and pleasure-inclusive CSE

Annex III: Example of analysis process

Meaning unit	Condensed meaning unit	Code	Sub-category	Category	Theme
...It was actually a question from a guy that was like 'yea so that makes you feel good and it makes you feel pleasure', and we were like 'yes, that is interesting that they are interested in addressing this issue!'	Young people want to know how it feels with sexual pleasure	Sexual pleasure is a topic young people are interested in learning about	Young people's own wishes to learn about their psychosexual development including sexual pleasure	Pleasure-inclusive and sex-positive CSE is important; to view sexuality as something positive rather than negative	The role of pleasure in CSE: a juggle between organizational desires and its adaptability in local contexts
...It is absolutely linked to well-being, and I think it has to do more concretely with the fact that when you understand the meaning of pleasure and how it impacts you emotionally and physically, then you start to understand your body	When you understand the meaning of pleasure and how it impacts you, then you understand your body	Pleasure is linked to sexual well-being, both physical and emotional aspects of health and rights.	The links between sexual pleasure and other human rights and health issues		
... people are sexual beings and it is a very positive thing to explore their own sexuality. But when we have to translate it into practice, in programming for example, we lack a common language and a discourse, a framework	We lack a common language, a framework, to talk about pleasure and explore positive aspects of sexuality in sexuality education.	The feeling that we lack knowledge of how to talk about pleasure and with what vocabulary.	We don't have a vocabulary around sex-positive aspects and pleasure to lean on	The role of language	
... you do not need to put the heading 'now we should talk pleasure' but to include it in how we talk about the body, reproductivity, and the right to say yes and say no, to use the type of vocabulary where you can use the word pleasure or desire. If you cannot use the word pleasure, you can use the formulation of 'how can it feel good' or 'how can it feel good inside', or 'how does it feel against the other', you can use that vocabulary	You can 'frame' the pleasure dialogue to talk around it for a successful CSE implementation, even if you are not allowed to use the word 'pleasure'.	We can use different kinds of vocabulary and 'frame' the pleasure dialogue when pleasure is stigmatized in the contexts.	Re-thinking about how to 'frame' the topic of pleasure		

Annex IV: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

Title: Qualitative research examining the role of sexual pleasure in Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in development projects/programs

I am Ellen Genstrand, a student at Lund University in Sweden, currently doing research to understand challenges and opportunities of including positive aspects of sexuality, such as sexual *pleasure*, in CSE work by development organisations. This is part of my Master Thesis in *International Development and Management* (LUMID program). I would like to know your perceptions and experiences of CSE and positive aspects of sexuality and would greatly appreciate your participation.

The aim of this study is to examine the role of one positive aspect of sexuality, *sexual pleasure*, and its challenges and opportunities in CSE in both non-formal and formal contexts. In addition, this research aims to give policy and programming recommendations to development programs and organizations/actors.

Whether you already are familiar with the concept of sexual pleasure or not, your participation will be highly appreciated, since these interviews will strive to collect data on challenges as well as opportunities concerning including positive aspects of sexuality in CSE. Please note that I am not asking you to share some very personal and confidential information, and you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics. You do not have to answer any question or take part in the interview if you don't wish to do so, and that is also fine. You do not have to give me any reason for not responding to any question, or for refusing to take part in the interview. With this research, the aim is to gather information regarding *organizational* views on the topic and broad reflections of sexual pleasure as a component in programs/projects with its challenges and opportunities, and *do not* seek to receive *personal* values or thoughts regarding this topic.

Anonymity and confidentiality: The research study will maintain its anonymity and all the names, including the name of the organization, used on the thesis will be pseudonyms. Everything mentioned in the interview, as well as in shared documents, will remain anonymous. Your and your organization's name will not be shared with or given to anyone except from the researcher (Ellen Genstrand).

The interview will take place on a private virtual platform where no one will be allowed to join except from the interviewer and the interviewee so that you can speak freely and openly. The expected time for the interview session is approximately one hour. The participation of this study is voluntary. Therefore, if you are uncomfortable at any point of the study please feel free to withdraw at any point and no explanation is needed.

If you agree to participate, the interview will be audio-recorded and the information recorded is confidential, and no one else except the researcher Ellen Genstrand will access to the information documented during your interview. Adding to this, no video will be recorded, only audio. The audio file will be secured on a hard drive. If you agree to share documentary material for this research, those documents will be stored on a hard drive as well and secured to not be shared outside the research.

If you are interested in participating in this study please contact me by email or telephone, if you have any questions regarding the study.

Ellen Genstrand

Annex V: Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Ice-breaking (5 min)

Open questions on the work of CSE: (5 min)

1) Please elaborate on how your organization work with CSE;

Probe

a) How do your organisation view CSE? And;

b) Which concepts and aspects should be included in comprehensive sexuality education (informal vs formal)?

c) What is the aim/purpose to be fulfilled?

2) What are the main benefits and challenges working with CSE?

General perspectives and thoughts about positive aspects of sex and sexual pleasure: (5 min)

3) Could, or could not, your work with sex-positive CSE, including pleasure, link to promote overall well-being of people?

a. How and why?

b. Is working with sexual pleasure important in the work of other SDGs?

Main challenges and the role of language: (20 min)

4) Please elaborate on the main challenges including the aspect of sexual *pleasure* in your work with CSE?

5) Please elaborate on the language around sexual pleasure;

Probe

a. How can we work with sexual pleasure even when it is very stigmatized in various contexts?

b. In which ways can language either hinder us or enabling us to discuss pleasure & sex-positivity?

c. In your view, what would be the *first step* to increase knowledge and behavior around sexual pleasure in projects/programs?

Recommendations / future development: (10)

6) Do you have any thoughts or examples of ‘best practices’ incorporating the aspect Sexual Pleasure in CSE work (*if not including pleasure, just in CSE*)

Probe

a. Within / outside your organization

7) What would your organization need (internally) in order to work with sexual pleasure in CSE?

Probe

a. Guidelines, examples of best practices, policies, expertise

b. Capacity strengthening?

Organizational / project stories and reflections: (15 min)

8) Are you working with positive aspects of sex and sexuality in your projects/programs?

Probe

a. If no, what hinders you to do that?

b. Do you have the competence as an organisation to do that, or is there a need of improving that somehow?

c. If yes, please elaborate a bit on *how* you are doing that;

d. What differs the most when it comes to challenges and opportunities working with the topic of pleasure in CSE in formal settings (e.g. schools and institutions) **vs** informal settings?

Questions to look at for desk-review / additional questions for interview if needed

9) Do the organizations objectives reflect a positive approach to sex and respect for other people's sexual preferences? (sex-positivity)

Probe

- a. Do your CSE work include explanations of all aspects of sexuality, including fantasies, desires and sexual activity alone and with others?
- b. Explains people's right to make their own decisions about sexuality and sexual relationships?
- c. Includes the importance of being able to give and accept pleasure?

Do the organizations objectives reflect a positive approach to sex and respect for other people's sexual preferences? (sex-positivity)