

4. VALUES, RIGHTS, CULTURE, AND SEXUALITY VALUES Key Concept 2

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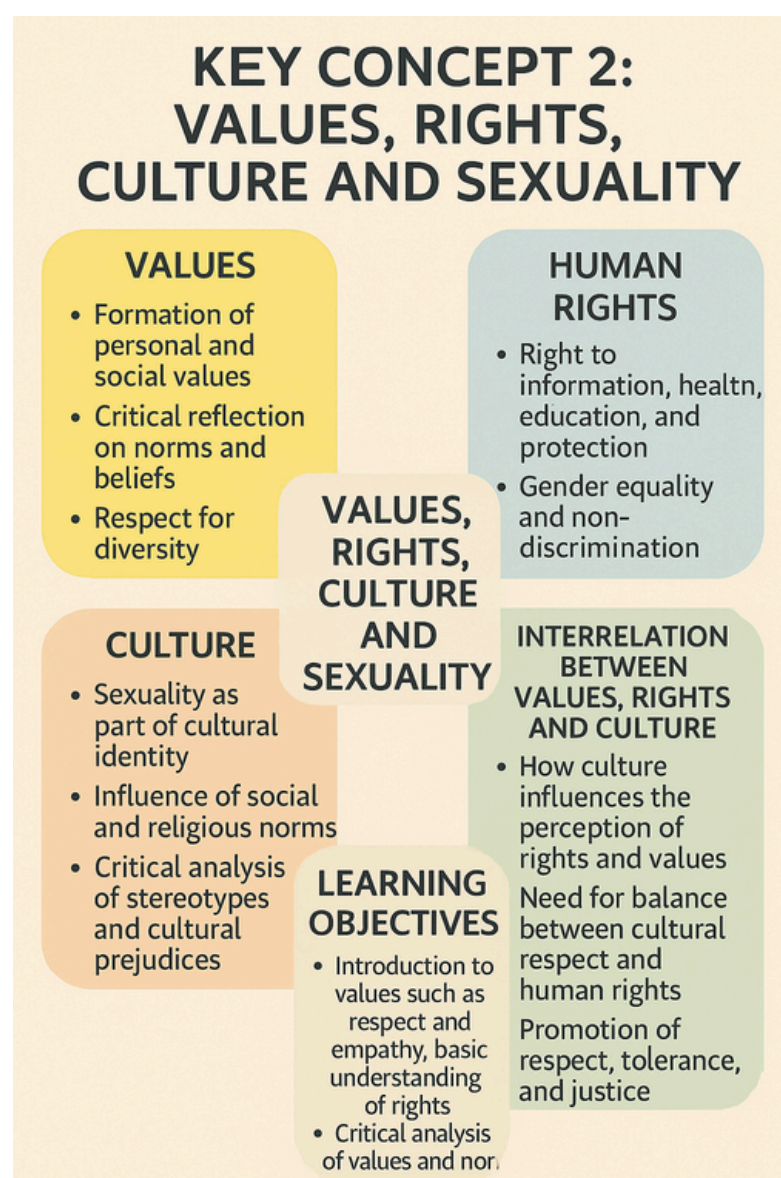
1. INTRODUCTION. KEY CONCEPT 2

The topic of Values, Rights, Culture, and Sexuality encompasses a series of fundamental principles that affect both individual and collective life, especially regarding how people relate to one another and to society as a whole.

When we talk about values, rights, culture, and sexuality with a focus on people with disabilities, it is essential to recognize that these individuals have the same rights, dignity, and ability to make decisions about their lives, values, and sexuality as anyone else. Inclusion, respect, and accessibility are key to ensuring a fairer and more equitable society.

It is divided into the following topics:

- **Values and Sexuality**
- **Human Rights and Sexuality**
- **Culture, Society, and Sexuality**



1.1 SKILLS TO DEVELOP

- **Critical thinking:** question social norms, stereotypes, and cultural beliefs.
- **Empathy and respect:** value the diversity of people, cultures, and abilities.
- **Communication:** express ideas, needs, and boundaries clearly and inclusively.
- **Self-awareness:** build a strong sense of identity and understanding of personal rights.
- **Decision-making:** make informed and autonomous choices about body and relationships.
- **Advocacy and participation:** act for equality, inclusion, and human rights.

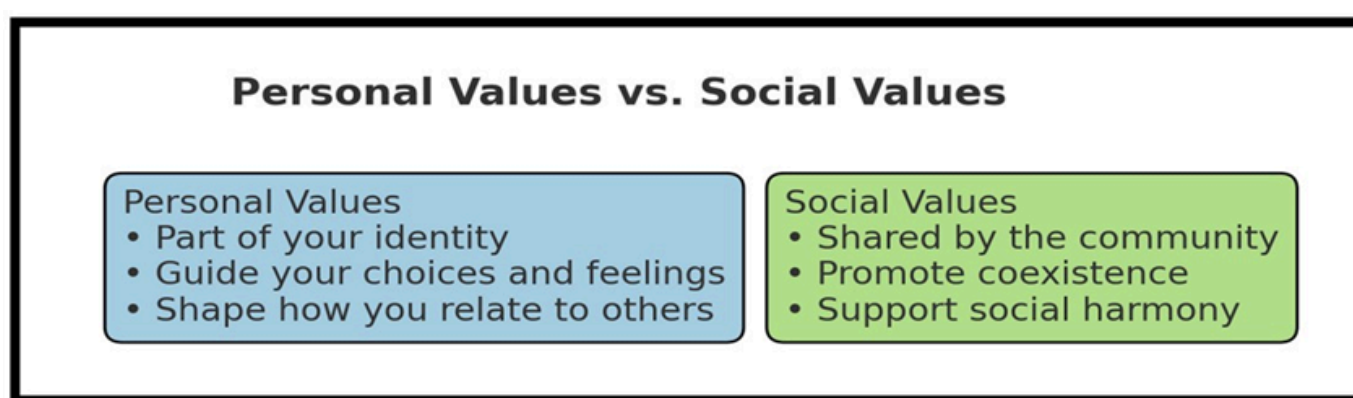
2. VALUES AND SEXUALITY

→ The objective of this topic is to understand how personal and social values influence the experience of sexuality.

2.1 WHAT IS MEANT BY VALUES

Values are principles, beliefs, or ideas that guide people's behavior and decisions. They represent what each individual considers important, right, or desirable in life.

They can be divided into two main categories: Personal values and Social values.



Personal and social values are the beliefs and principles that guide individuals' actions and decisions within a society. Values are learned from early childhood through family, school, personal experiences, and culture.

• Formation of personal and social values:

This refers to the process of acquiring beliefs and principles that help individuals make ethical decisions based on respect, responsibility, and the common good.

For people with disabilities, it is essential to have an environment that promotes the development of values such as autonomy, respect, and empathy. Inclusive education and appropriate support allow these individuals to fully develop and participate in society.

• Critical reflection on norms and beliefs:

As individuals mature, it is important to develop the ability to question and reflect on the norms and beliefs they have received, as some may be restrictive, unjust, or outdated. This analysis is essential to fostering a more inclusive and respectful society that embraces diversity.

• Respect for diversity:

Respect for individual differences—whether in terms of culture, sexual orientation, gender, religion, or any other characteristic—is fundamental to building an equitable and prejudice-free society. Embracing diversity means learning to coexist with people who think and act differently.

• Ethics in interpersonal relationships:

Human relationships should be based on ethical principles that promote equity, mutual respect, honesty, and empathy. Ethics in personal relationships also means recognizing each individual's rights and dignity, and rejecting any form of abuse or discrimination. Ethical treatment includes recognizing the rights and desires of people with disabilities, including their right to make decisions about their own lives, their bodies, and their emotional relationships.

2.2 HOW DO VALUES AND BELIEFS GUIDE OUR DECISIONS

Values and beliefs guide our decisions by acting as an internal compass that helps us determine what we consider right, important, or acceptable in different life situations.

How?

- They give meaning to our choices
- They help us prioritize what truly matters to us.
- They influence our behavior and boundaries
- They define what we are willing or not willing to do. For example, someone who values honesty will avoid lying, even if it would be convenient.
- They help us make consistent decisions
- We make choices that align with what we believe in, giving us peace of mind and personal coherence.
- They affect how we relate to others
- They shape how we treat people, the kind of friendships or relationships we seek, and what behaviors we accept or reject.



EXAMPLES:

- In personal life:

A person who values health will choose to eat well and exercise.

- In relationships: Someone who values respect will treat others with courtesy and listen to their opinions.

If someone believes in gender equality, they will make decisions that avoid machismo or traditional imposed roles.

- Choosing when and with whom to start a sexual relationship:

Some people value responsibility and choose to wait until they feel emotionally and physically ready.

Others believe that sexuality should be lived freely and make more open decisions, but always with respect and consent.

- Acceptance of sexual diversity:

Values such as inclusion and respect help people accept different sexual orientations (such as homosexuality, bisexuality, etc.).

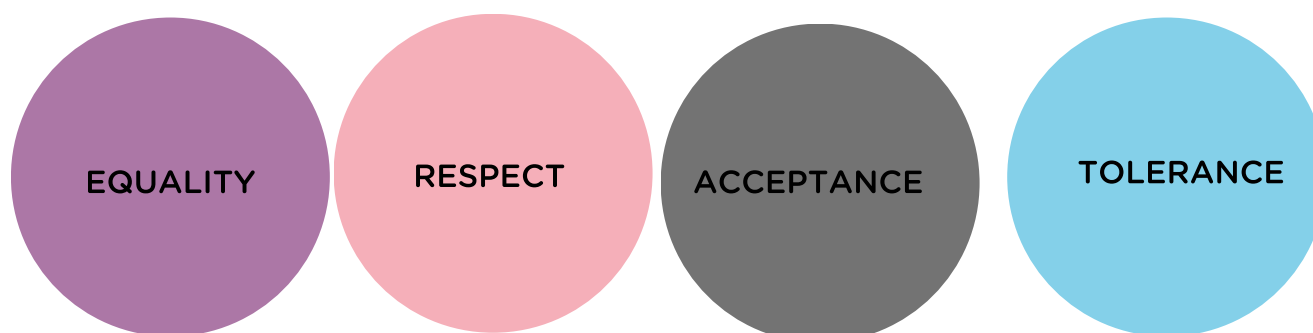


Practical example:

A teenage girl who values autonomy and self-respect may decide not to have sex if she feels she's not ready, even if her partner insists.

Another person who believes that sexuality is a natural part of love may choose to explore it with responsibility and consent.

2.3 IMPORTANT PERSONAL VALUES



2.4 VALUES THAT AFFECT GENDER EXPECTATIONS

What does "gender expectations" mean?

They are ideas about how people "should" behave based on their gender (male, female, or other). These expectations are not always fair or realistic, and many stem from traditional values.



MANY SOCIAL VALUES TELL US HOW MEN AND WOMEN "SHOULD" ACT:

EXAMPLE: "GIRLS SHOULD BE MODEST" VS. "BOYS CAN HAVE MANY PARTNERS."

THESE VALUES INFLUENCE:

- Who is "allowed" to express their sexuality?
- How they are expected to act in a relationship.

VALUES THAT INFLUENCE THESE EXPECTATIONS:

- Value of obedience or submission

In some cultures, women are expected to be obedient, quiet, or dependent, while men are taught to lead or protect.

This can limit a person's freedom of expression or decision-making.

- Value of strength and emotional toughness

Many boys are taught that "men don't cry" or that they must be strong at all times.

This can lead boys to hide their emotions or avoid asking for help.

- Value of purity or modesty

Girls may be given the idea that they must "protect themselves" more, or that their worth depends on their sexual behavior.

Meanwhile, boys may be allowed more sexual freedom and even praised for it.

- Value of traditional gender roles

Women are expected to take care of the home or children, while men are expected to work outside the house.

This creates inequality and can prevent both genders from freely exploring their interests or abilities.



WHEN VALUES ARE BASED ON EQUALITY, IT PROMOTES THE IDEA THAT ALL PEOPLE, REGARDLESS OF GENDER, SHOULD HAVE THE SAME RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

2.5 PERSONAL VALUES CAN AFFECT THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS

Personal values can affect the rights of others, especially when they are imposed without respect for diversity or without recognizing individual freedom :

- Imposing beliefs or moral judgments: When someone believes their values are the only valid ones.
- Discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Denial of information or sex education: Some families or institutions, due to their values, restrict access to information about sexuality and reproductive health.
- Controlling others' decisions: When a personal value leads someone to influence or control their partner's decisions (for example, whether or not to use contraception), it limits the other person's autonomy.

2.6 DEFENDING PERSONAL VALUES WITH RESPECT

- Everyone has the right to their own beliefs and values, but we must avoid judging or imposing them on others
 - The diversity of thought enriches coexistence and promotes peaceful and fair living together.
- It's important to express what we think without fear, but also without attacking or imposing.



Example of respectful self-expression:

"I don't feel ready for a sexual relationship, and that doesn't mean I don't love my partner. It's a decision that makes me feel safe."



Having personal values is a positive thing, but it's essential to respect the freedom, choices, and rights of others—even when their beliefs differ from our own.

The key lies in empathy and in building a coexistence based on equality.

3. HUMAN RIGHTS AND SEXUALITY

Human rights are inherent to all human beings, regardless of nationality, residence, gender, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, language, or any other status.
(ONU)



The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted and proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948.

3.1 SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Sexual and reproductive rights are part of the human rights recognized by international organizations such as the United Nations (UN). These rights protect the freedom of all people to make informed, free, and responsible decisions about their sexuality and reproductive health.

The International Conference on Population and Development, held in 1994, recognized sexual and reproductive rights as human rights..

The World Health Organization (WHO) establishes a series of civil, political, social, cultural, and economic rights; some of these are directly related to sexual and reproductive rights:

- Rights to life, liberty, autonomy, and security of the person
- Right to equality and non-discrimination
- Right to privacy
- Rights to the highest standard of health (including sexual health) and the highest level of social security
- Rights to marriage and to form a family with the free and full consent of both spouses, and to equality within marriage and at its dissolution
- Right to decide the number of children and the interval between births
- Rights to information and education

(World Health Organization, 2018).

Sexual and reproductive rights include:

- The right to decide about one's sexuality and reproduction without coercion, discrimination, or violence.
- Access to sexual and reproductive health services, sexuality education, and the right to autonomy over one's own body.
- Recognition of the sexual and reproductive rights of persons with disabilities.

3.2 THE SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

IMPORTANT!

"Persons with disabilities have the same sexual and reproductive rights as anyone else."

This includes:

- **Right to inclusive sexuality education, access to sexual and reproductive healthcare tailored to their needs, and the ability to make informed choices about their sexual and reproductive lives.**
- **People with disabilities frequently encounter obstacles to obtaining this information and these services—barriers that must be actively eliminated.**

"GENDER PERSPECTIVE AND DISABILITY "



→ It is essential to promote gender equality and non-discrimination in all aspects of life, recognizing the intersections between disability and gender.

→ A gender perspective is essential in sexual and reproductive rights, considering that women with disabilities are frequently subjected to dual discrimination.

"EMPOWERMENT FOR DECISION-MAKING"



→ Empowerment is the process through which people acquire the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to make informed decisions about their lives."

This is is very important for people to fully and actively exercise their rights.

IMPORTANT!

The empowerment of people with disabilities is key to enabling them to make informed decisions about their lives, their relationships, and their sexuality.

This includes providing appropriate education and resources tailored to their need

PRACTICAL EXAMPLE:

A group of young people with physical and intellectual disabilities attends weekly workshops on comprehensive sexuality education.

During one of the sessions, the educators create a space for the participants to suggest topics they're interested in—such as contraception, romantic relationships, gender identity, or consent.

The educators support the group in choosing what they want to learn and how they want to explore the topics (e.g., through videos, discussions, or creative activities).

Additionally, a small committee of young participants is formed to help plan future sessions, suggesting activities, guest speakers, and ground rules.



This approach provides knowledge, and also empowers the young people to take part in decisions about their sexual education and well-being, fostering autonomy, critical thinking, and self-confidence.

3.3. PROMOTION OF SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS.

"Promotion is not solely the responsibility of the State; it is necessary for educational institutions, families, and associations to also take part."

Promoting Sexual and Reproductive Rights

- Create spaces for dialogue and education based on respect and inclusion.
- Challenge myths, prejudices, and discriminatory practices.
- Support access to adequate, non-judgemental health services.

◆ The Importance of Promoting Sexual and Reproductive Rights

Active promotion of these rights is essential to:



Reduce unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and gender-based violence



Foster gender equity and empowerment, especially for adolescents and young women



Strengthen bodily autonomy and informed decision-making



Protect a group of historically marginalized groups: women, LGBTIQ+, young people, persons with disabilities, and those living in poverty

PRACTICAL EXAMPLE:

Maria, a 19-year-old young woman with an intellectual disability, is in a relationship with another young person her age. They like each other and have begun to explore affection and physical contact.

Although her family means well and acts out of fear, they believe that Maria lacks the capacity to make decisions regarding her sexuality. As a result, they try to control her personal interactions, forbid her from going out alone, and avoid discussions about sexual topics.

Decision:

With the support of a professional specialized in disability and sexuality, Maria begins to learn about her rights, consent, self-care, and contraceptive methods. After careful reflection, she decides she wants to experience her sexuality in an informed and responsible way.

Result:

Maria exercises her right to make decisions about her body and sexuality in a safe environment with the appropriate support. Although her family still has some concerns, they gradually begin to understand that Maria's autonomy and access to respectful, adapted sexual education are essential to her well-being.



4. CULTURE, SOCIETY, AND SEXUALITY

Culture, society, and sexuality are interconnected concepts that shape individual behaviors, attitudes, and values.

Culture influences how sexuality is perceived, discussed, and expressed within different communities, while societal norms and laws can regulate sexual behaviors and relationships.

These elements also determine the access to sexual health education and the rights of individuals to make decisions regarding their bodies and relationships.

Understanding the role of culture and society in shaping sexuality is essential for promoting sexual rights, gender equality, and empowerment.

4.1 CULTURE

Definition "A set of distinctive traits, spiritual, material, and emotional, that characterize a society or social group. Culture encompasses, in addition to the arts and literature, ways of life, fundamental human rights, value systems, beliefs, and traditions." (UNESCO)

Culture have a fundamental role in shaping the identity of individuals and in the perception of sexuality, values, and human rights.

4.2 SOCIETY

Anthony Giddens defines society as "A group of people living in a specific territory, subject to a common system of political authority, and aware of possessing an identity that distinguishes it from other groups." (GIDDENS, Anthony (1999), Sociology. Madrid, Alianza).

Society defines norms about what is accepted or not.

Culture and society are related but not identical concepts. We can say that a society shares a common culture. Society refers to an organized group of people who share a territory and a language, while culture refers to the knowledge, beliefs, values, customs, and behaviors shared by that group, that society.

THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN SOCIETY:

The family plays a fundamental role in shaping our understanding of sexual identity and values.

It is the first and most influential environment where children and adolescents begin to form their values, attitudes, and knowledge about sexuality.



4.3 SEXUALITY AS PART OF CULTURAL IDENTITY:

In various cultures, sexuality is closely linked to deeply rooted traditions, norms, and beliefs. The way societies understand and perceive sexuality has evolved over time, influencing individuals' attitudes and behaviors regarding topics such as sexual orientation, gender, and sexual expression.

Influence of social and religious norms:

Social and religious norms establish patterns of behavior regarding what is considered "normal" or "acceptable" in terms of sexuality. These norms vary significantly between cultures and directly impact how people experience and express their sexuality.

—————→ FROM AN INCLUSIVE PERSPECTIVE:

- It is acknowledged that each culture has unique ways of living sexuality and gender identities.
- The idea that there is a single "correct" way of being, living, or relating is rejected.
- Cultural diversity is valued, and respect for different expressions of affection, body, and gender is promoted.
- Efforts are made to dismantle stereotypes and prejudices that have historically marginalized - groups such as LGBTIQ+ individuals, people with disabilities, and others.

—————→ CULTURE PROFOUNDLY INFLUENCES THE PERCEPTION OF DISABILITY:

- Many cultures have invisibilized or stigmatized people with disabilities, viewing them as asexual, dependent, or as not having the right to decide about their emotional and sexual lives.
- An inclusive viewpoint recognizes that people with disabilities are active cultural subjects with the right to express their identity, affection, and sexuality.
- There is a need to break down cultural myths and prejudices that deny their right to love, be loved, form families, or have sexual relationships.

4.4 INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VALUES, RIGHTS, AND CULTURE

- Values, rights, and culture are closely interconnected, as the way each of these elements develops and is interpreted has a profound influence on the everyday lives of individuals.
- Culture influences the perception of rights and values, which, in turn, deeply impacts how rights and values are understood and lived within each society.

For example, in some cultures, sexual and reproductive rights may be restricted by traditional norms, while in others, these rights are given greater importance. The perception of what is just and right also varies according to cultural beliefs.

NEED FOR BALANCE BETWEEN CULTURAL RESPECT AND HUMAN RIGHTS



It is essential to find a balance between respecting cultural traditions and ensuring that human rights are protected. Some cultural practices may conflict with fundamental human rights, so it is necessary to promote mutual respect without sacrificing universal rights.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLE:

TONY'S STORY



Cultural and Social Context: Tony is a 20-year-old young man with an intellectual disability. He lives in an urban neighborhood where traditional gender roles are deeply ingrained, and homosexuality is still highly stigmatized. In his family and community, masculinity is associated with strength, independence, and heterosexuality.

Perception of Disability and Sexual Diversity:

Tony identifies as gay, but he has never openly shared this with his family due to fear of rejection. Additionally, he is often treated as asexual or viewed only through the lens of his disability.

Impact on Luis's Identity and Rights:

Tony feels isolated. He struggles with internalized shame and cannot find safe spaces where he can freely explore his identity. At school, he never received inclusive sex education.

Intervention from an Inclusive Perspective:

A local LGBTQ+ and disability rights organization begins offering inclusive sex education workshops. Tony attends these workshops and finds a safe space where he can express himself without fear of judgment. He meets others who share similar experiences and learns about his rights, self-care, healthy relationships, and how to advocate for himself.

Result: Tony begins to feel more secure in his identity. He talks to his family about it, makes new friendships, and starts speaking publicly about the need for inclusive sex education that represents all bodies and identities.

5. ISAWP PROJECT TEACHING MATERIALS : Inclusive Sexuality: A World of Possibilities

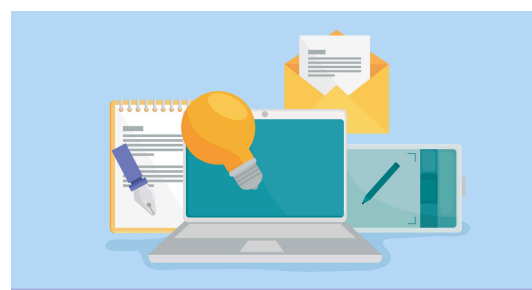
After the theoretical explanations, we now present the teaching materials developed within the framework of the ISAWP project: Inclusive Sexuality: A World of Possibilities. These materials will serve as the foundation for delivering the workshop.

Affective-Sexual Education for Young People with Disabilities which will be held in each of the project's partner countries.

These materials have been created specifically for the ISAWP project, following the key concepts recommended by UNESCO, and taking into account the necessary adaptations to ensure accessibility and suitability for the target group.

The teaching materials for Key Concept 2 have been developed by Gençlik Fırsatları Derneği (GFD) , partner in the ISAWP project.

You can find the materials in "Unit 4 in Classroom".



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