

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN PROVIDING SEX EDUCATION FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD IN PATTINGALLOANG BARU VILLAGE

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Abstract

This research was conducted to understand parents' involvement in providing sex education to early childhood in Pattingalloang Baru Village. The purpose of this study was to identify the methods used by parents in educating children about sex. The method used was a qualitative approach with data collection techniques through interviews, observation, and documentation. The results showed that parents have tried to provide information related to sex to early childhood through several forms of education, such as introducing gender, telling about the sex organs in humans, teaching manners of interpersonal relationships, separating beds between boys and girls, and keeping children's watching from shows that can have a negative impact. The implication of this study is the importance of parental awareness and involvement in sex education in early childhood to form a healthy and positive understanding of sexuality from an early age.

Keywords: Sex education, Early childhood, Parental involvement

Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengetahui keterlibatan orang tua dalam memberikan pendidikan seks kepada anak usia dini di Desa Pattingalloang Baru. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui metode yang digunakan orang tua dalam memberikan pendidikan seks kepada anak. Metode yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa orang tua telah berusaha memberikan informasi terkait seks kepada anak usia dini melalui beberapa bentuk pendidikan, seperti mengenalkan jenis kelamin, menceritakan tentang organ seks pada manusia, mengajarkan sopan santun dalam hubungan interpersonal, memisahkan tempat tidur antara anak laki-laki dan anak perempuan, serta menjauhkan anak dari tayangan yang dapat berdampak negatif. Implikasi dari penelitian ini adalah pentingnya kesadaran dan keterlibatan orang tua dalam pendidikan seks pada anak usia dini untuk membentuk pemahaman seksualitas yang sehat dan positif sejak dini.

Kata kunci: Pendidikan seks, Anak usia dini, Keterlibatan orang tua

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood, often referred to as the golden age, is a critical period in child development. In this phase, the child's ability to absorb information reaches its peak, supported by high curiosity and rapid brain development. Children at this age are very vulnerable to the influence of the surrounding environment, including in terms of sexuality education. However, sexual education in early childhood is often ignored or considered taboo to talk about, especially in the family environment in Indonesia. In comparison, Rohanachandra et al. (2023) study found

that almost all parents (99.7%) in the outpatient department of Colombo South Teaching Hospital (CSTH) Sri Lanka believed that children should get sexual education to protect themselves. In Indonesia, sexual education is still a sensitive topic and is often seen as controversial, although it has started to be implemented in some kindergartens (Yusuf et al., 2023). Sexuality education in early childhood is very important given its significant impact on their future physical and mental development. Children who receive appropriate sexual education at an early age tend to have a better understanding of their sexual identity and how to interact with their surroundings. Sexual abuse often occurs due to a lack of sexual education for children. Therefore, by providing appropriate and age-appropriate socialisation, children can learn to recognise inappropriate behaviour and know how to report it to trusted adults (Indriasari et al., 2020; Nugroho & Purba, 2024). In line with this, Patty et al. (2022) highlighted that failure to provide sex education in early childhood can increase the risk of sexual violence against them in the surrounding environment, including within the family. Early childhood is an important period in a child's development, where their ability to absorb information reaches its peak, supported by high curiosity and rapid brain development. Children at this age are very vulnerable to the influence of their surroundings, including in terms of sexuality education.

According to Rohanachandra et al. (2023), sexual education is defined as an age-appropriate, culturally relevant approach to teaching about sex and relationships, by providing scientifically accurate information, realistically, and without judgement. Children are the epitome of innocence, yet their ignorance about sex often leads to sexuality perversion or even abuse by adults. Donkor & Lariba (2017) points out that hiding sex education from children makes them more vulnerable, as they are in the exploration phase and have high curiosity. Children who receive reproductive health education tend to report healthier sexual behaviour compared to those who do not. Salloum et al. (2020) stated the implications of the lack of sexuality education in early childhood include the risk of children only focusing on the dangers of strangers without adequate caution towards known adults in their environment. Such misinformation may also hinder parents' recognition and understanding of signs of sexual abuse that may be perpetrated by people they know.

Fácio Jr et al. (2020) defines child sexual abuse as any form of sexual behaviour for the purpose of sexual stimulation, which can affect neurodevelopment and result in cognitive, emotional, behavioural and social problems. Sexual abuse during the developmental phase of the brain can alter neurodevelopment, resulting in serious cognitive, emotional, behavioural and social problems. Then to overcome this problem, Yusuf et al. (2023) suggested that sex education materials be delivered to early childhood with simple language, explaining the physical differences between men and women, and sexual terms through educational stories, pictures and games. Many parents and educators recognise the importance of sexual education as an integral part of a child's education.

In a relevant context, Aisyah et al. (2023) emphasised the role of democratic parenting in the introduction of sexual education in 4-5 year old children, helping children to interact, be confident and independent in communicating about their environmental conditions. On the other hand, Sarikhani et al. (2023) suggested that the appropriate age to start sex education is above 3 years old, and the family should be the main agent in delivering sexual education. Sex education at an early age can also teach children about the importance of privacy and personal boundaries Nabillah (2019). Parental involvement in providing proper education on sexuality

not only protects children from the threat of sexual violence but also helps them understand and appreciate important aspects of their development.

Therefore, parents have the primary responsibility in educating their children according to their norms and capacities, including in terms of sex education at an early age. This education is important to prevent children's misconceptions about sexuality. Although not easy, this education is essential to guide children on the right path from an early age. Sex education in early childhood focuses on simple recognition of gender and body anatomy, as well as setting appropriate boundaries in physical interactions. Unlike the more in-depth sex education for adolescents, early childhood education aims to avoid misconceptions that may affect their perception of the body and sexuality. Mistaken experiences at this stage may risk leading to sexual deviance in the future. Therefore, this study aims to explore how parents in Pattingalloang Baru Village engage in providing sex education in early childhood, as well as the strategies they employ in this process.

METHODS

The approach used in this research is a qualitative approach with descriptive research type. Qualitative research according to Creswell (2013) begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems that address the meaning given by individuals or groups to social or human problems. Therefore, to explore parental involvement in providing sex education in early childhood, this research uses an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, data collection in natural settings that are sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes.

This research uses two data sources, namely primary and secondary. Primary data sources are words and actions obtained from five couples of parents of early childhood in Pattingalloang Baru Village, while secondary data sources are additional data such as literature or literature documentation. The data collection techniques include interviews, observation, and documentation. The whole data is then analysed using data analysis techniques which include data reduction, data presentation, conclusions, and verification

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This research was conducted for three months. The results of the research were obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation to find out the involvement of parents in providing sex education to early childhood in Pattingalloang Baru Village, Ujung Tanah Sub-district, Makassar City. The overall results are summarised in the following table.

Table 1. Parental Involvement in Providing Sex Education to Early Childhood Children

Indicators	Research Results
Introduction to Gender Differences	Parents have introduced children to the differences between male and female sexes and gender identity in a simple and easy-to-understand manner. Some of the activities that have been carried out, in addition to verbal or talking directly to the child, are through parenting,

Indicators	Research Results
	storybooks, and roleplaying games.
Explanation of Reproductive Organ Functions	Parents have told children about body parts (genital organs) and their functions. The introduction of sexual organs is done simply but still using the actual term of the sexual organs, not the term of society. Parents have also explained the importance of protecting and maintaining sexual organs from any interference.
Teaching Etiquette in Interaction	Parents have also sought children to have a sense of courtesy and shame in the family and neighbourhood. This helps children to protect and maintain their aurat or honour. Children who have understood manners are characterised by behaviours such as not urinating carelessly and changing clothes or revealing aurat only in the right place.
Separation of Bedrooms Based on Gender	Parents have separated boys' and girls' rooms to help them understand their respective gender natures or identities early on. This is important because each child has different physical and psychological specifications.
Limiting Children's Access to Negative Content	Parents have also supervised and protected their children from negative connotations on TV and internet media. They accompany their children when watching TV and place age restrictions on YouTube channels to ensure that children are protected from inappropriate content.

Based on the table above, parents have implemented various efforts to educate children about sex differences and gender identity, using parenting, storybooks, and roleplay games. In addition, they have also provided simple yet precise explanations about the functions of reproductive organs and the importance of protecting sexual organs from interference. Efforts in teaching interaction etiquette have helped children understand manners, which are marked by polite behaviour such as not urinating in the open and changing clothes in the appropriate place. Parents also separate boys' and girls' bedrooms to help them recognise their gender identity. Furthermore, parents monitor and limit their children's access to negative content in the media, accompany them when watching TV, and provide age restrictions on YouTube channels to ensure the safety of content consumed by children.

Discussion

Introduction to Gender Differences

The results of the study showed that parents have introduced physical differences or gender between boys and girls to early childhood. Respondents provide real examples through how to dress according to gender. For example, respondents M and ID show how to be a good Muslim woman by wearing a hijab when going out of the house and wearing clothes that cover the genitals. This action shows their personality as a role model for their daughters. Parents also use a mentoring approach to explain the physical differences between boys and girls. They explain that there are two genders, namely boys and girls, using the analogy of external physical

form and the type of clothing worn every day. In addition, respondent HW stimulates her son's identity by choosing toys that are common for boys, such as robots and cars.

Parents' efforts to provide an understanding of the physical differences between men and women are carried out through reasonable and simple modeling and mentoring. This approach can stimulate children's sexual development so that they do not experience deviant behavior in the future. Tretsakis (2003) stated that healthy and good sex education will make boys grow into responsible adult men and girls into caring and gentle women. This means that gender identity has the potential to strengthen an individual's beliefs about themselves as men or women, according to the physical characteristics they have, and this can be seen in roles and behaviors that are in line with applicable norms (Davina et al., 2024; Sary et al., 2023). Therefore, the involvement of parents as primary role models in introducing physical differences between men and women is very important. This not only protects the child's future from deviant sexual behavior but also helps in the development of healthy character from an early age.

Explanation of the Function of Reproductive Organs

In providing sex education to early childhood, parents should act as the primary information providers. Substantive education or teaching about sex to early childhood includes the role of human gender and introduction to body anatomy with simple delivery, as well as how to care for it. All respondents provided mentoring by guiding children to care for and maintain their genitals, starting from how to clean the genitals to emphasizing to children not to let strangers see or touch their genitals. However, based on research findings, the attitude of parents in providing understanding related to genital organs or sex has not been carried out by all respondents. Only one parent, namely RK, conveyed the real name of the sexual organ to early childhood. Most parents when providing information use regional terms such as "bird" for "penis" and "tempe" for "vagina." The use of these substitute terms can actually make children think that there is something wrong with the real name of the organ.

When children enter preschool age, they will show interest in their sexual organs or genitals. Observations show that boys begin to explore their bodies, such as stroking themselves or doing genital manipulation (holding genitals), and asking their parents about it. This curiosity of early childhood is normal and cannot be said to be sexual activity. Therefore, parents do not need to worry and hide related information from their children. Actions that can be taken by parents are to respond to this behavior naturally and continue to answer their questions. One way to anticipate parental mistakes is to accept children's questions and provide appropriate answers. Yafie (2017) stated that parents must enrich themselves with knowledge and information about correct sex. When children ask questions, parents must listen and understand the motives behind the questions, clarify the problem, and provide simple and appropriate answers. According to Davina et al. (2024), effective education about gender and sexuality from an early age can help children understand and accept their gender identity better. Therefore, parents should provide the right and simple answers when providing sex education related to genital organs. Parents need to introduce the real terms early on. Another important thing is to explain to children about which body parts can be seen by others and which cannot, and emphasize the importance of covering them with clothes.

Teaching Etiquette in Interaction

Based on the results of research in Pattingalloang Baru Village, Ujung Tanah District, Makassar City, there are several forms of etiquette teaching given by parents to early childhood. This teaching includes instilling a sense of shame and patterns of interaction with other humans. These two aspects are closely related, because when children have a sense of shame related to sexuality, they tend to maintain and preserve their honor, both in the family and community environment. The results of the data in the field, it was found that respondents taught children to respect others, especially those of the opposite sex, such as not carelessly touching other people's bodies, including their own siblings' bodies. Respondents HW and ID taught their children about the values of politeness that must be applied in the family and surrounding environment. Meanwhile, respondent RK prefers to accompany children when playing at home or in the surrounding environment, and asks other family members to accompany the child. This is important because according to A.J. Pauweni et al. (2022), this understanding will help children in maintaining and preserving their genitals or honor. Children who have begun to understand this according to their age will be able to take care of themselves, such as not urinating or defecating in the open, not changing clothes in front of other people, and not revealing their private parts.

This study also illustrates how parents mentor their children not to defecate carelessly, not to change clothes in front of other people, and not to show their private parts. These actions play a big role in protecting children from irresponsible individuals who might take advantage of the situation to commit sexual crimes. If these values are instilled early on, children will feel uncomfortable and uneasy when strange adults approach them or do something unwanted, such as holding, stroking, or touching their bodies.

Sexual crimes often occur in children because of their ignorance about the abuse they experience, so they do not immediately tell their parents (A.J. Pauweni et al., 2022; Yafie, 2017). Therefore, instilling social etiquette can help protect early childhood from unwanted things. In addition, teaching social etiquette will also stimulate children to respect the privacy of others, such as not touching friends' bodies carelessly. Therefore, parental involvement in teaching the ethics of interaction is very important to shape children's attitudes and behaviors that are in accordance with social norms and protect their safety from potential dangers.

Separation of Bedrooms Based on Gender

Yafie (2017) argues that parents should separate boys' and girls' bedrooms. This is important to teach that boys and girls have different natures and body organs. Each child has specific characteristics both physically and psychologically. With this understanding, children will try to appear according to their identity. Therefore, parents should provide toys or clothes that are appropriate to their child's gender, such as cars for boys and dolls for girls, or trousers for boys and skirts and headscarves for girls. However, the results of the study showed that only three out of five respondents in Pattingalloang Baru Village, Ujung Tanah District, Makassar City, separated children's bedrooms based on gender. These three respondents also did not let their children enter their parents' rooms without permission.

The other two respondents did not separate their children's bedrooms because they considered their children's condition, who often woke up late at night, and because their children were still young. This shows that some parents in Pattingalloang Baru Village have not fully responded seriously to the importance of separating children's rooms or beds based on gender. This finding

indicates that there is variation in the implementation of separating children's bedrooms among parents. While some parents implement this separation to teach differences in nature and gender identity, others face practical challenges that hinder the implementation of the policy. The influence of factors such as children's sleeping habits and age are important considerations in parents' decisions regarding bedroom separation.

Limiting Children's Access to Negative Content

Children's viewing currently requires strict supervision from parents, because many shows contain vulgar elements. Exposure to this kind of content can influence children and become a stimulus for deviant sexual behavior without them realizing it. The results of a study in Pattingalloang Baru Village, Ujung Tanah District, Makassar City, showed that most respondents implemented mentoring measures by accompanying their children when watching television or similar media. This assistance aims to limit the possibility of children being exposed to negative shows. However, not all parents can carry out this effort consistently. Some parents, such as respondents M and S, face obstacles due to their busy work, such as managing sales, so they cannot accompany their children intensively when watching television or YouTube.

According to Yafie (2017), in dealing with children's sexual development and their curiosity that may arise at any time, parents must always be ready and able to adapt. Parents need to take advantage of these moments to provide guidance, such as when watching television with children and a show containing violence or sexual harassment appears. It is important to immediately explain to children about the importance of respecting and appreciating their own bodies, and avoiding unwanted touch from others. Sexual deviation in children can start from exposure to inappropriate viewing. Therefore, parents need to maintain and limit children's access to negative content. Some steps that can be taken by parents, as described in the research of Azis et al. (2020) include (1) accompanying children while watching television to help choose appropriate viewing, (2) limiting and supervising the use of gadgets and internet facilities when parents are not at home, and providing simple understanding to children, (3) checking and controlling children's viewing to ensure that they do not watch negative content, and (4) paying attention to and controlling children when watching inappropriate videos, and not indulging children with negative content. These steps are important to ensure that children are not exposed to content that may negatively impact their development and to protect them from potential adverse effects that may arise from inappropriate viewing.

Factors That Can Influence Parental Involvement in Sex Education for Early Childhood

In the context of early childhood sex education, various factors influence parents' motivation to get involved. Among these factors are parents' concerns about the possibility of children getting wrong information about sex from other sources, as well as the expectation that children will be able to care for themselves independently. Primary motivations for parents to get involved in sex education include efforts to protect children from sex-related dangers, such as sexual abuse and deviation, and to address inaccurate information that children may get. In addition, there is an awareness of the importance of sex education from an early age, although the scope of this education may be limited to self-awareness. However, there are also inhibiting factors that can hinder parents' involvement in sex education.

These inhibiting factors include shame, lack of awareness to discuss sex with children, lack of self-confidence, inadequate communication skills, and the absence of family traditions to

discuss sex (Jin, 2021; Li & Yang, 2022). Field findings show that these obstacles are consistent with the challenges faced by parents, such as difficulties in conveying appropriate information about sex to young children, taboos, and parents' busy schedules resulting in lack of time to discuss sex education in depth with their children. These factors reflect that the family culture or tradition in involving and discussing sex with children is still underdeveloped. Many parents consider sex education a taboo issue, so they do not see it as an important need for their children.

CONCLUSION

This study provides in-depth insights into parental involvement in early childhood sex education through several important dimensions. First, parents have crucial involvement in introducing differences in sex and gender identity to their children. Through modeling and mentoring approaches, they can provide examples that are in accordance with the child's natural sex and explain the differences in a simple way. This is expected to help children develop a correct understanding of gender and form an appropriate self-identity. Second, in terms of explaining the function of reproductive organs, education must be delivered accurately and easily understood. Although many parents provide mentoring regarding genital organ care, there is still the use of inappropriate terms. This shows the need to increase parental knowledge and confidence in providing correct information about sexual organs, so that children can understand and care for their bodies well.

Third, teaching the ethics of interaction is also very important to protect children from potential sexual dangers and build their social awareness. Parents who teach these ethics can help children understand the importance of maintaining privacy and respecting other people's bodies, as well as avoiding inappropriate actions. Fourth, separating bedrooms based on gender is a recommended practice to teach the natural differences between boys and girls. However, the implementation of this practice varies depending on the situation and individual needs of the child, indicating that flexibility in implementing this policy may be needed. Fifth, limiting access to negative content is an important step to protect children from viewing that can influence their behavior. Constraints such as parents' busy schedules can affect their involvement in supervising their children's viewing. Therefore, an effective strategy is needed to limit access and ensure that children are only exposed to appropriate content.

Based on these conclusions, there is a need to develop training programs for parents in providing effective sex education. The program should include training on how to convey information correctly, address cultural taboos, and media monitoring strategies. In addition, it is important to conduct further research on the implementation of sex education practices in various social and cultural contexts. Thus, these efforts can improve the quality of sex education for children and support their holistic development in the future.

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