



The Role of Parents in Providing Sex Education to Preschool Children

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Abstract. Violence against women in Indonesia is dominated by cases of sexual violence. Sex education in early childhood is needed to give children an understanding of the anatomy of the human reproductive organs in a simple and understandable way. This study aims to determine the role of parents in providing sex education in early childhood or preschool. This study uses a quantitative descriptive design with a cross-sectional design. The research was conducted at Masyithoh Ngasem Nursery School on 44 children who were purposively selected. Parental role was measured using a questionnaire. The data were analysed univariately. The results showed that most of the parents (90.21%) had provided good sex education to their children. In addition to explaining the genital organs, parents must be able to give examples and teach children to tell their parents if someone else touches their genitals. Sex education in early childhood is expected to prevent child sexual abuse and other sexual crimes. Children who know will be able to avoid, refuse and tell their parents if they are confronted with conditions that are suspected to lead to sexual crimes.

Keywords: Parental role, sex education, early childhood, preschool children

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INTRODUCTION

The golden age of childhood is a crucial period for the child's future life. Between the ages of 0 and 6, children go through a golden period when they begin to be sensitive to different stimuli. During this period, children are very receptive to stimuli from their environment [1]. At this time they need a very wide range of opportunities to develop in order to grow optimally physically, mentally, psychologically and spiritually. However, many children experience physical and sexual abuse [2].

According to the National Commission for Child Protection, there were 3,547 complaints in Indonesia throughout 2023 [3]. From January to November 2023, there were 15,120 cases of violence against children, with 12,158 victims being girls and 4,691 victims being boys, with sexual violence cases being the most common case from 2019 to 2023 [4]. Cases of violence against women in Indonesia in 2021 reached 5,953 cases, including 895 cases of sexual violence, 345 cases of victims of pornography and cybercrime, 175 cases of abuse and neglect, 147 cases of economically and/or sexually exploited children, and 126 cases of children in conflict with the law as perpetrators [5].

Sexual education in early childhood is necessary to prevent deviant behaviour and the misuse of reproductive organs. The information provided includes knowledge of the anatomy of the

reproductive organs and their functions, as well as the inculcation of morals, ethics and commitment, including religion [6]. Sexuality education must be provided by parents and must be based on religious and moral values, but there are still many parents who feel taboo and embarrassed if their children know about sex [7].

Some parents assume that sex education is provided at school, so they do not feel the need to teach their children. Parents leave it entirely to teachers or schools to provide sex education. Sex education in early childhood should be the responsibility of parents and schools only as a complement to the information given to children. The principle in providing sex education to children is to be ready to provide information at any time, to provide examples and guidance together between both parents, and to emphasise mutual respect and privacy. Children should be taught which parts of the body to protect and what to do if someone molests them. Therefore, the role of parents is very necessary in introducing or providing sex education to children. This is one of the steps to prevent child sexual abuse and other sexual crimes. When children know, they are able to refuse, avoid and complain to the closest person if someone commits a sexual crime [6], [8]. This study aims to determine the role of parents in providing early sex education to pre-school children.

METHOD

Study Design

This study is a descriptive study using a cross-sectional approach. The research was conducted in Masyithoh Ngasem Kindergarten, Bantul Regency in May 2023. The variables examined in this study included parental age, education, occupation, and parental role in early childhood sex education. The study received ethical approval from Surya Global College of Health Sciences under number 1.14/KEPK/SSG/VIII/2023.

Population and Sample

The population of this study was all parents whose children attended Masyithoh Ngasem Kindergarten. The research sample consisted of 44 people selected through purposive sampling technique. The inclusion criteria were parents with children between the ages of 4 and 6 who were willing to participate in the research sample and who were able to complete the questionnaire. The exclusion criteria were parents with children with special needs and children with a history of chronic illness.

Research Procedure

The study was conducted on 44 parents of students selected according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Data were collected using a questionnaire. Before filling out the questionnaire, respondents were given an explanation of the research conducted and asked to fill in informed consent. Parents of students who have met the criteria filled out the questionnaire independently. The completed questionnaires were returned to the researcher for analysis.

Instrument

The instrument in this study is a questionnaire that has been tested for validity and reliability. The validity test used the *Pearson Correlation Test* and of the 14 questions there was 1 invalid question, so it was removed from the questionnaire. The reliability test results obtained an Alpha Cronbach value of 0.700 so that the questionnaire was declared reliable.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed by univariate analysis using SPSS software. Data were presented in the form of frequency distribution tables. The role of parents in providing sex education was calculated based on the percentage of answers from the questionnaire and categorized into good (76 - 100%), sufficient (56 - 75%), and less (<55%).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of Respondent

A survey of 44 parents at Masyithoh Ngasem Kindergarten found that most of parents (63.64%) were between 31 and 40 years old, had a senior high school education (63.64%) and worked as housewives (45.45%) (See Table 1). The level of education influences the ability to receive and

absorb information. The more educated a person is, the more open they are to receiving information. The results of this study show that most respondents are educated up to intermediate level, senior high school. A previous study shows that there is a link between mothers' education and their behaviour in providing sex education to their children [9].

Good parenting plays an important role in the development of children's knowledge. The problem facing families today is that most parents are busy working. Working parents are often bound by the demands of very busy working hours, even from morning to night, leaving little time to pay attention to children. In contrast, non-working or stay-at-home mothers tend to have more time with their children, allowing them to maximise their ability to provide sex education to their children [10], [11].

Table 1. Characteristics of Parents of Students of Masyithoh Ngasem Kindergarten in 2023

Variable	Value	Percentage (%)
Age		
< 30	5	11.36
31 – 40	28	63.64
> 40	11	25.00
Education Level		
Primary school	2	4.54
Junior high school	7	15.90
Senior high school	28	63.64
Diploma degree	3	6.82
Bachelor degree	3	6.82
Master degree	1	2.28
Type of Work		
Non-working mothers	20	45.45
Workers	8	18.19
Salaried employees	12	27.28
Self-employed	2	4.54
Teachers	2	4.54

Parents' Role in Providing Sex Education

Parents have a very important role in providing sex education to children. The role of parents in providing sex education in early childhood consists of 13 indicators (See Table 2). The indicator with the highest percentage (100.00%) are that parents act as role models for their children and that parents teach their children to report if someone touches their vital organs. Children's attitudes and behaviour are a reflection of parenting at home [12]. If parents can carry out their roles well and provide examples of good and correct behaviours, children will be influenced to act and behave the same as their parents [13].

Table 2. The Role of Parents in Providing Sex Education to Early Childhood in 2023

No	Indicators	Persentase (%)	Category
1	Do parents start teaching sex education from an early age?	61.36	Sufficient
2	Do parents provide role models for their children? For example: leaving the bathroom wearing clothes.	100.00	Good
3	Do parents introduce the child's intimate organs?	90.90	Good
4	Do parents teach the child that these organs should not be shown to anyone, especially the opposite sex?	97.72	Good
5	Do parents teach their children to report to their parents if someone touches their intimate organs without their parents' knowledge?	100.00	Good
6	Do parents teach their children to say "no" to strangers?	81.81	Good
7	Do parents explain according to the child's age if the child asks about the differences between male and female bodies?	97.75	Good
8	Do parents train their children to learn to wear clothes that cover the aurat?	97.75	Good
9	Do parents not allow children to enter their parents'	70.45	Sufficient

No	Indicators	Persentase (%)	Category
	rooms carelessly?		
10	Do parents teach their children to ask permission first when entering an adult's room? For example knocking on the door first.	86.36	Good
11	Do parents teach their children to close the bathroom when taking a shower?	95.45	Good
12	Do parents teach their children to scream as loud as possible when in a threatened situation?	97.75	Good
13	Do parents direct the TV channel that is appropriate for the child's age?	95.45	Good
	Mean score	90.21	Good

The question with the lowest percentage was whether parents start providing sex education to their children from an early age. Only 61.36% of respondents did so. Many parents think that talking about sex with their children is taboo [14]. Parents should be able to be a friend to talk to or discuss difficulties or problems experienced by children so that children feel comfortable and protected [12].

Overall the role of parents in providing early childhood sex education at Masyithoh Ngasem Kindergarten is in the good category (90.21%). In line with research which states that parents realise that they have an obligation to provide education to children about how to dress, behave and behave and how to treat themselves properly so that they unwittingly provide sexual education to their children. In providing explanations to children using language that is easy to understand, providing continuous affection, being a role model for children in terms of dressing, how to get along, and parents must be able to be friends, supervisors, listeners and advisers for children [15], [16].

Sex education for early childhood in the family substantially functions as an effort or practical approach in order to anticipate sexual deviations in children. In accordance with the level of understanding and psychological conditions of children, sex education should be provided by parents by understanding children's curiosity, providing explanations in accordance with cognitive abilities, providing honest and professional responses, and sex education materials can be integrated with the provision of other knowledge [17]. Sex education materials that must be instilled from an early age are treating children according to their nature, introducing anatomy and physiology of the body to children, teaching sexual norms (the concept of aurat and how to dress), association with friends of the same sex and between sexes, about reproductive health, and the status of people (mahram) in the family [17], [18].

Early sex education in pre-school children is the responsibility of parents not only teachers as educators at school. Providing early sex education to children is expected to prevent sexual crimes against children. The limitation of this study is the data collection that only uses questionnaires. Further research through in-depth interviews is needed to further explore the role of parents in providing sex education in early childhood.

CONCLUSION

The role of parents in Masyithoh Ngasem Kindergarten in providing early childhood sex education to children is in the good category with a percentage of 90.21%. Parents play a role in explaining to children about the anatomy of intimate organs, the differences between women and men, teaching related to ethics and morals such as not showing intimate organs to other people let alone the opposite sex, how to dress properly and correctly, and what to do if the child is in a threatened situation. Parents should also be able to set an example for their children in dressing and socialising because children tend to imitate their parents. This research is expected to be the basis for providing education to parents about the importance of providing early sex education to children.

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