



OVERVIEW OF PARENTS' ACTIONS IN PROVIDING SEXUAL EDUCATION TO PRESCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

Children in Indonesia and globally remain vulnerable to sexual violence. Child sexual abuse has a serious impact, both mentally and physically. Objective to determine the description of parents' actions in providing sexual education to preschool-age children. This type of research is a quantitative study with a cross-sectional design. The population in the study were all parents who had preschool-age children. The sample in this study amounted to 270 with simple random sampling technique. The research instrument used a questionnaire consisting of: Parents' education, parents' occupation, parents' knowledge, parents' attitude, exposure to information media, and perception. The dependent variable instrument used the Self-Administered Questionnaire parent's practice of Sex Education. Data were analyzed using SPSS software. The study showed that 29.6% of parents have not provided sexual education, and 70.4% of parents have provided sexual education. Most of the respondents have provided sexual education to their children.

Keywords: child education; parental action; parental role; preschool-age children; sexual education

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INTRODUCTION

Children in Indonesia and globally are vulnerable to sexual violence. WHO data (2020) shows that up to one billion children aged 2-17 years experience violence or neglect (Putra Annovika, Lisa Indra Rani, 2019). In Indonesia, cases of sexual violence against children have increased significantly, with the number of cases reaching 14,446 in 2021, 16,106 in 2022, and 18,175 in 2023 (SIMFONI PPA, 2022). Bengkulu Province, particularly Rejang Lebong Regency, experienced the same trend with cases increasing from 14 cases in 2021, to 18 cases in 2022, and 25 cases in 2023 (DPA3PPKB, 2023).

Child abuse can occur as a result of many factors, either alone or in combination (Neherta, Fajria, et al., 2023). Child sexual abuse has a serious impact, both mentally and physically. Victims can experience a range of prolonged psychological and social problems, such as depression, loss of appetite, sleep disturbances, and learning difficulties. The long-term impact can even include physical problems, behavioral changes, developmental disorders, and trauma that continues into adulthood (Sanjeevi et al., 2018 ; Santoso & Novrianza, 2022 ; Kumalasari & Kusumiati, 2023). Child safety and protection is our collective duty as a society. With the right attention and appropriate action, we can move towards a world where every child can grow and develop in a safe, loving and supportive environment (Neherta, Banowo, & Sari, 2023).

Sexual education in early childhood is an important step in preventing sexual violence. The results of a study by Neherta, et al., (2024) showed that 95.1% of children had experienced violence in the family, including physical violence (94.60%), psychological violence (95.10%), sexual violence (22.10%), and social violence (31.60%) (Neherta et al., 2024). Through sexual education, children can understand their bodies, know the boundaries that must be maintained, and learn to reject inappropriate behavior (Margaretta & Kristyaningsih, 2020). In addition, sexual education is also expected to straighten children's sexual understanding and behavior, prevent negative thoughts, and reduce the risk of sexual violence in the future (Maulana Muslich et al., 2023). Parental involvement in providing sexual education is also important, as effective communication between parents and children can shape a healthy understanding of sexuality (Balakrishnan & Singh, 2023).

Parents have a major role in providing sexual education to preschoolers, as children at this stage are already actively exploring their bodies and gender. They are not only the child's main source of learning, but also influence the success of sexual violence prevention programs. However, despite their crucial role, many parents face limitations in providing comprehensive sexual education to their children. Factors such as level of education, knowledge, attitudes and family or community support influence parents' actions in providing sexual education to children, in accordance with Lawrance Green's theory that behavior is influenced by predisposing, enabling and reinforcing factors (Zhang & Yuan, 2023 ; Prikhidko & Kenny, 2021).

Research shows that factors such as parents' education, occupation, knowledge, attitudes and exposure to information media have a relationship with their behavior in providing sexual education to children. Although some studies found a significant relationship between these factors and parental behavior, there were also results that did not show a significant relationship. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the various factors that influence parents' behavior in providing sexual education to their children (Gandeswari et al., 2020 ;(Lisnawati & Apriliani, 2023). This study aims to determine the description of parents' actions in providing sexual education to preschool-age children in Selupu Rejang District, Bengkulu Province.

METHOD

This type of research is a quantitative study with a cross-sectional design to determine the description of parents' actions in providing sexual education to preschool-age children conducted in April 2024 in Selupu Rejang District, Bengkulu Province. The population in the study were all parents who have preschool age children who attend kindergarten, PAUD or RA in Selupu Rejang District which amounted to 830 people. The sample in this study amounted to 270 with simple random sampling technique. Prior to data collection, permission was granted and obtained from respondents. The questionnaire was used to collect data on the characteristics of respondents consisting of parental identity, namely: name, address, age, gender, child's name and child's age.

The independent variable instrument consists of: parental education, parental occupation, parental knowledge, parental attitude, exposure to information media, and perception. The dependent variable instrument uses the Self-Administered Questionnaire parent's practice of Sex Education (Chen & Da, 2005) which researchers adopted from research (Safitri, 2017). Researchers conducted validity and reliability tests again. Validity and reliability tests were conducted on 50 parents of pre-school children at Edelweis Kindergarten in Sindang Kelingi District. Edelweis Kindergarten was chosen because it has almost the same respondent

characteristics as the research site and is located in a village directly adjacent to the research location. Validity and reliability tests were conducted on March 28-29, 2024. The final interpretation stated that the instrument used was valid and reliable. Ethical approval has been obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Nursing, Andalas University (No.264.laiketik/KEPKFKEPUNAND). Data were analyzed using SPSS software version 26. The analysis included descriptive statistical tests such as frequency distribution and percentage.

RESULTS

Table 1.
Frequency distribution of respondent characteristics (n=270)

Respondent Characteristics	f	%
Age		
< 35 years	235	87,0
≥ 35 years	35	13,0
Gender		
Man	11	4,1
Woman	259	95,9
Tribe		
Non-java tribe	33	12,2
Javanese Tribe	237	87,8
Marital status		
Divorce	3	1,1
Marry	267	98,9
Number of children		
Small number of children (1-2 children)	198	73,3
Medium number of children (3-4 children)	66	24,4
Number of children (≥ 5 children)	6	2,2
Child age		
4 years	78	28,9
5 years	178	65,9
6 Years	14	5,2

Table 1, information regarding the characteristics of respondents was obtained. Of the total 270 respondents, most respondents were <35 years old, as many as 235 people (87.0%), most respondents were female, as many as 259 people (95.9%), most respondents were Javanese, as many as 237 people (87.8%), most respondents had married marital status, as many as 267 people (98.9%), most respondents had few children, as many as 198 people (73.3%), and most respondents had children aged 5 years, as many as 178 people (65.9%).

Table 2.
Frequency distribution of research variables (n=270)

Research Variables	f	%
Pendidikan Orang tua		
Low (Not Elementary School Graduate, Elementary School Graduate, Junior High School Graduate)	120	44,4
High (High School Graduate, Academy/College)	150	55,6
Parents' Work		
Not working	83	30,7
Work (civil servants, private employees, farmers, entrepreneurs)	187	69,3
Parental Knowledge		
Less (Score < 56% correct)	97	35,9
Sufficient (Score 56 - 75% correct)	42	15,6
Good (Score 76 - 100% correct)	131	48,5
Parents' Attitude		
Negative (Score ≤ 20)	87	32,2
Positive (Score > 20)	183	67,8

Research Variables	f	%
Exposure to information media		
Less exposed (score ≤ 3)	126	46,7
Exposed (score > 3)	144	53,3
Parental Perception		
Negative (Score ≤ 31)	103	38,1
Positive (Score > 31)	167	61,9
The act of providing sexual education		
Not yet giving (Score ≤ 5)	80	29,6
Already giving (Score > 5)	190	70,4

Table 2, shows the frequency distribution of research variables. Based on the results of the study, it was found that most of the respondents were highly educated, namely 150 people (55.6%), most of the respondents worked, namely 187 people (69.3%), a small proportion of respondents had good knowledge, namely 131 people (48.5%), most of the respondents had a positive attitude, namely 183 people (67.8%), most of the respondents were exposed to information media, namely 144 people (53.3%), most of the respondents had positive perceptions, namely 167 people (61.9%), most of the respondents had provided sexual education, namely 190 people (70.4%).

DISCUSSION

Parental education in Selupu Rejang District, Bengkulu Province, shows that the majority of respondents have a high level of education (55.6%), with 47.1% having completed high school and 8.5% having completed higher education. A smaller portion of respondents have a low level of education (44.4%), with 13.0% having completed elementary school and 31.4% having completed middle school. These findings are consistent with other studies that show a majority of respondents with a high level of education, such as the study by (Gandeswari et al., 2020). The roads in Selupu Rejang District are in good condition, with adequate and well-maintained infrastructure. Good road access greatly supports activities in health, trade, and other public services, including education. Formal education affects employment levels and social status, and the higher a person's education, the more receptive they are to information and knowledge. Conversely, low education can hinder the development of attitudes that are open to new information and values.

Parents play an important role in educating their children from an early age, as their level of education influences how they process information, motivate, and change their mindset and actions. Highly educated parents tend to provide more positive and effective sexual education, feel more comfortable discussing the topic, and can create an open and honest environment for their children. These research results align with the study by Abdullah et al., (2020) which shows a correlation between parents' education levels and average total knowledge scores, indicating that higher education levels correlate with better knowledge related to sexuality. However, the study by Nur & Maili (2022) shows different results, indicating that parental involvement in education is not always influenced by the parents' education level. This suggests that the parents' education level may not be the sole determinant of their ability to effectively educate their children (Nur & Malli, 2022). Based on research conducted on parents of preschool-aged children in Selupu Rejang District, Bengkulu Province, it was found that most respondents are employed, totaling 187 people (69.3%). This study also shows that working parents have broader knowledge and better understanding in managing emotions and stress, as well as better access to sexual education resources. However, they face challenges in providing sexual education to their children due to limited time and energy because of work (Azira et al., 2020).

Knowledge includes information, skills and insights gained through experience, education or learning, enabling individuals to make sense of the world and make informed decisions. Knowledge can be acquired empirically through personal experience and develops into descriptive knowledge (Swarjana, 2022). The research results show that nearly half of the respondents have good knowledge, totaling 131 people (48.5%). Parents' knowledge significantly affects their children's sexual education and related health and safety behavior (Putri & Kurniati, 2019 ; Ariesty & Rusmariana, 2022). Based on the questionnaire results, 58.9% of respondents answered incorrectly to the question that children aged 4-6 years should not wear revealing clothing. Allowing children aged 4-6 to wear revealing clothing can contribute to a culture that normalizes inappropriate behavior, increases their vulnerability to sexual abuse, and has long-term implications for their body image and self-esteem. It is important to ensure that children are dressed appropriately and receive age-appropriate sexual education to prevent early sexualization and reduce the risk of abuse and sexual violence (Wylie et al., 2021)

Attitude is a person's tendency to respond to stimuli around them, thus influencing their behavior. The majority of parents in Selupu Rejang District (67.78%) show a positive attitude towards children's sexual education. Similar studies in Iran, as well as those by Sari & Nur'aini, (2018) also show majority parental support for sexual education. This support is seen as a form of concern and effort to prevent sexual violence against children. However, there is still a perception that sexual education is the responsibility of schools, not a shared responsibility. Effective sexual education requires cooperation between parents and schools, as well as socialization to change negative parental perceptions. Teaching children to be wary of strangers is very important to keep them safe.

Sexual education is important in children's growth and development, and parents are the primary source of sexual information for them. Information media such as the internet, television, and social media help parents gain knowledge and guidance on sexual education. Research shows that most parents (53.3%) are exposed to media information about sexual education, influencing their attitudes and actions in educating their children about sexuality. Selupu Rejang District in Bengkulu Province is an area with good media information exposure. This broad media exposure provides various benefits for the local community, including in terms of education, public awareness, and parental knowledge on various issues, including sexual education. Wise use of information media, especially video media, can enrich parental knowledge and increase the effectiveness of the sexual education provided to their children (UNESCO, 2022). The results of a similar study by Neherta, (2017) who used a variety of learning media to provide education on the prevention of sexual violence. The media used include: short video films, presentations using power point, discussions using illustrated sketch stories and role play. Then added with one learning media that is very favored by children, namely by singing (Neherta, 2017).

Perception is an individual's experience of objects or events involving the interpretation of information, influenced by stimuli and personal experiences. Most parents (61.9%) have a positive perception of children's sexual education, while 46.3% still consider it taboo. Based on the questionnaire results, 41.1% of respondents stated that children should not ask their parents about sexual matters. Sociocultural factors such as the concepts of "wedi" and "isin" in Javanese culture play a role in these perceptions. This can contribute to a culture where children are not equipped to protect themselves from sexual abuse and are less likely to report such incidents. It is important to ensure that children receive age-appropriate education about their bodies and sexual development, and that parents encourage open communication about

sexual issues to help prevent abuse and sexual exploitation (Yağan Güder & Alabay, 2018; Neherta, Banowo, & Mulyasari, 2023).

Action is the result of a person's knowledge and attitude. Providing sexual education to preschool children requires a careful approach and appropriate language selection. Most parents (70.4%) have provided sexual education to their children, including teaching about private body parts and the importance of saying "no" and telling parents if sexual violence occurs. Almost all parents in this study (87.0%) are under 35 years old. Younger parents tend to have a more contemporary understanding of sexuality and may be more open to discussing this topic with their children. Almost all respondents are female or mothers (95.9%), as mothers play a crucial and more dominant role in household matters. Almost all parents in this study (98.9%) have a married status (intact family), where both parents are married and living together, allowing for the sharing of responsibilities in providing sexual education. Most parents in this study have a small number of children (1-2 children) (73.3%), enabling them to have more time and energy to focus on each child individually, allowing for deeper and more personal discussions about sexuality compared to parents with more children. It is important to provide sexual education objectively and according to the child's developmental stage (Notoadmodjo, 2018). Parents can take action to prevent child sexual abuse. One of the interventions that can be done is primary prevention using the model "ICAS" smart mother, safe child, an intervention model given to mothers who have preschool-age children as primary prevention to avoid pre-school children from sexual abuse. As an intervention effort carried out by nurses against sexual abuse (Neherta & Nurdin, 2018).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, most respondents were highly educated, employed, well-informed, positive-minded, exposed to information media, had positive perceptions, and had provided sexual education.

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