

Research article

The Perceptions of Millennial Parents About Their Role in Maintaining the Mental Health of Children Aged 3--6 Years Through Sex Education

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ORCIDSitawaty Tjiptorini: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9616-4015>**Abstract.**

Sex education is crucial for children and young people. Parents rely on schools for teaching sex education to their children. However, schools in Indonesia have been wary of teaching sex education to students, especially those in pre-schools. The recent rise of sexual harassment and violence cases are clear examples of children's lack of sexual knowledge which they should have received from the early years either through their parents or at school. This study analyzed the perceptions of millennial parents about their role in maintaining the mental health of children aged three to six years by educating them on sex. The study used a qualitative approach using interviews and observation methods for data collection. The subjects included were parents living in Tangerang Regency, Banten. This research is expected to increase the general public's understanding of the importance of sex education for pre-school children.

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1. Introduction

The word sex is always considered to be vulgar, dirty, disgusting, porno, profanity, and so forth. So far, sex is identical with adults only and some people think that sex education is not appropriate for young children because people think that children will be curious about sex so they will find out for themselves what sex is. The issue of sex education at this time is not the parents perception, so that they leave all their children's education to schools, including sex education. Meanwhile, schools have not been optimal in providing sex education[1].

In fact, due to the lack of sex education for children, there are cases of children becoming victims of sexual crimes, one of which can be seen in the data provided by KPAI (The National Commission for Child Protection). KPAI received reports of 2,737

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cases of violence against children in 2017. Of the 2,737 cases reported resulted in 2,848 victims of which 52 percent were sexual violence. sexual violence that occurred, sodomy cases became the most, namely 771 cases (54 percent), sexual abuse in 511 cases (36 percent), rape in 122 cases (9 percent), and 'incest' in 20 cases (1 percent)[2]

Based on KPAI data, since 2013 there have been more than 3,200 cases of violence against children in Indonesia, while 50% of them are cases of sexual violence against children. Most violence occurs in the immediate environment of the child, such as at home and at school. Data (KPAI, 2014) in fact there are still many children who do not get their rights. This is evidenced by the case of child sexual abuse that occurred at Jakarta International School. If we look at the case, we think where at that time the party should protect the child. This is very concerning, especially the victims are children. From this case, it can be seen that children have not received the right to get maximum protection. And if you look at the school background, the School is one of the international standard schools and many people or parents trust their children to be entrusted or go to school for various reasons, one of which may be because of guaranteed security. But in reality their children are victims of acts of sexual harassment, and what is even more sad, this is done by those who are in the school[3]. With this incident, parents are worried about the whereabouts of their children who attend Jakarta International School (JIS). With this incident, parents should pay more attention to their children safety and well-being Therefore, providing information about gender or sex differences should be an important part of education in schools[4].

According to Freud [5] children age 3-6 years old are in the phallic stage. During the phallic stage, pleasure focuses on the genitals. The pleasures of masturbation and the fantasy life of children that accompany auto-erotic activities pave the way for the emergence of the Oedipus Complex. Where boys want to have their mother and get rid of their father, while girls want to have their father and get rid of their mother. These feelings manifest themselves in fantasy when the child masturbates. so that at that age children need sex education to better understand their own physical and feelings by improving their mental health through their physical, mental and social understanding[6].

For children, sex is about gender, genitals and sexual relations. Meanwhile, sexuality is everything regarding the way of thinking, feeling, dressing, expressing opinions and behaving[7]. In another terms sex in a narrow sense that mean sex, meanwhile in a broad sense mean sexuality. Sexuality is a term that includes everything related to sex. Sexual education is an effort to provide correct knowledge to children to prepare children to adapt well to sexual attitudes in the future; and the provision of this knowledge causes the child to acquire the right logical inclination towards sexual and reproductive

problems[8]. Providing information about sex differences and their functions is an effort to raise awareness and provide information about problems involving sex. The information provided includes knowledge about the reproductive organs by instilling moral values, religions, ethics, and safety standards, so that there are no "abuse" of the reproductive organs. That is why, providing information about gender or sex differences can be said to be the forerunner of family life education which has a very important meaning[9].

Psychologists recommend parents to provide information about gender or sex differences at a young age, usually starting around three years old or more, according to the children development stages. Discussing information related to sex is never easy, especially to children. However, providing information about sex differences to children is very important and necessary, so that children do not have misinformation regarding sex when they grow up. Starting when children are about 3-4 years old, because at this age children are able to carry out two-ways communication and can understand sex differences and can also continue with the introduction of sex and internal organs[6].

Judging from what is happening in society about sex education, that society has not fully provided sex education to children as early as possible. People still consider it as taboo about sex education, while providing sex education is very important to protect children from sexual violence and understanding mental health themselves.

2. Purpose Of the Research

This research is important so that it can provide input to the community, especially parents and the government regarding the perception of sex education, in order to help parents in providing information on gender or sex differences to their children. If the perception is positive, it is hoped that this early sex education can be given to children as early as pre-school ages.

In short term period, this qualitative research method aims to (1) determine the perception of millennial parents on the mental health of children aged 3-6 years old by providing sex education. (2) knowing the important for parents to provide information on sex to their children. (3) determine factors that influence the perception of parents in providing information on sex to their children.

As for the long-term, this research aims to (1) provide understanding to parents that providing sex education to children is very important. It also help millennial parents on how to provide save and understandable sex education. (2) provide understanding to parties educators that providing sex education to children can be done in schools.

(3) increase the repertoire of knowledge about sexual science and the importance of providing information on sex as early as possible.

3. Method

3.1. Scope Of Activities

This qualitative research is divided into two scopes of activities. Based on the age characteristics of the research target with the age range of parent/s of the millennial generation (born during 1980-1995) as primary subjects, and children as secondary subjects with ages 3-6 years old. Research location was carried out in Tangerang Regency, Banten. The interviews and observations were conducted during June 2021.

3.2. Research Flow

Judging from the data and the type of research approach used in this study is a qualitative approach. As for what is meant by qualitative research, namely research that intend to understand the phenomenon of what is experienced by the research subject holistically, and by way of description in the form of words and language, in a special natural context and by utilizing various scientific methods [10].

The approach of this research has a descriptive type. Descriptive research is research that seeks to describe current problem solving based on data[11]. The type of descriptive qualitative research used in this study is intended to obtain in-depth information about the perception of millennial parents towards providing sex education to children aged 3-6 years old.

The time of the study was conducted at prime time (time between afternoon to evening or weekend) because at the time between afternoon to evening or on weekends, parents will always be there for their children, so parents can provide sex education to their children. With specific situations when bathing or tidying children (putting on clothes) to make it easier to provide knowledge related to body parts in the context of sex education.

One component of qualitative research is the unit of analysis. Fundamentally, the unit of analysis is concerned with the problem of determining what is meant by a case in research. In the classic case study, the case may relate to a person, so that the individual is the case to be studied, and the individual is the primary unit of analysis.

Based on the understanding of the unit of analysis above, it can be concluded that the unit of analysis in the study is the subject that will be examined in the case. Thus, the unit of analysis in this study is the perception of millennial parents towards providing sex education to their children. The unit of analysis was deepened through interview and observation methods. An interview can be defined as a one-on-one conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee. The interviewer asks questions to which the interviewee responds, so that information can be transferred from the interviewee to the interviewer (and the rest of the interview audiences).

The interview procedure uses unstructured interview techniques, free interviews where the researcher does not use interview guidelines that have been systematically and completely arranged for data collection. The interview guide used is only an outline of the problems to be asked, so that researchers can do probing in the interview session. In the interview method, the researcher conducted an interview in June 2021, with the respondent, namely the mother of 5 year old child twin, in order to strengthen the statement from the respondent, the researcher interviewed two members of the respondent, namely the respondent's husband and the respondent's mother using WhatsApp media in the form of Video Call.

In addition to interviews with unstructured techniques, this study uses observation techniques as data reinforcement. Observation can be interpreted as an activity towards a process or object with the intention of feeling and then understanding the knowledge of a phenomenon based on previously known knowledge and ideas, to obtain the information needed to continue research. Observations were made to the parents of 5 year old twins. Observations were made so that researchers could find out when parents gave sex education to children, observations were made during bathing time which are around 5 pm in the afternoon. This is the time when parents usually bathed their children, and when they play with their children before dinner.

In qualitative research, it is necessary to check the validity of the data so that the data obtained is valid, which includes 1) data credibility test, 2) transferability test, 3) dependability test, 4) confirmability test. As Sugiyono[12] argues, the data validity test in qualitative research includes tests, credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability), and confirmability (objectivity). But what is more important is testing the credibility of the data by extending observations, increasing persistence, triangulation, using other reference materials, and member checks.

Source triangulation in credibility testing is defined as checking data from various sources in various ways, and at various times[13]. Source triangulation, which is to test the existing data, was carried out on respondents (mother of 5-year-old twins),

respondent's husband, and respondent's mother. The three data sources are then described, categorized, which views are the same, which are different, and which are specific. The data that has been analyzed by the researcher so as to produce a conclusion is then asked for an agreement (member check) with the three data sources.

4. Results

4.1. Activity Results

From the research that has been carried out with a qualitative approach using interview and observation methods, the results show that respondents already knew what sex education was, respondents have also implemented sex education as early as possible for their 5-year-old twins. Respondents provide education, among others, by not allowing their children to leave the bathroom without wearing clothes, so that respondents always teach their twins to use towels to cover their bodies. Respondents also provide an understanding of gender differences between boys and girls, also respondents provide education about sex only when the children want to listen. During bedtime, respondents also telling children about the importance of taking care of themselves, and always emphasized on gender differences and roles between boys and girls. It can be concluded that respondents are very active in providing education about sex to their twins.

In addition to the respondent, this study was also conducted on the respondent's husband with the aim of strengthening the statement from the respondent. After taking data through the interview method with the respondent's husband, it was found that the respondent's husband also played an active role in providing sex education to his children. The respondent's husband always told his twins by not urinating indiscriminately and providing education about knowing intimate body parts or privacy and not being touched by others. The respondent's husband also admitted that the respondent gave sex education to children at playtime, before going to bed or other time when they are considered a good time. Respondent's husband also felt that giving sex education to his children who are 5 years old was very appropriate.

In addition to the respondent and the respondent's husband, this research was conducted by interviewing the respondent's mother with the aim of strengthening the respondent's words. Also the respondent's mother has played an active role in providing sex education to her twin grandchildren. The respondent's mother always gave advice and experiences to the respondent and her husband in providing sex education to their

children. Respondent's mother also taught her grandchildren to always be careful with strangers, and explained to her grandchildren by not allowing other people to touch their bodies and always taking care of their body parts.

So it can be concluded that the statement from the respondent with the statement from her husband and her mother are the same. They have the same answer about the way they provide sex education to their children. The respondent, her husband and her mother have good knowledge about sex education, and are always active in providing information about sex differences to their twin children and grandchildren. The respondent, her husband and her mother also have good cooperation in providing sex education, so that in providing sex education there is no difference of opinion from the respondent, her husband and her mother.

4.2. Impact on Subjects

After conducting research with a qualitative approach through interview and observation techniques, there are impacts of research on the subjects, including:

Parents respond well to providing sex education to their children.

Parents have a good perception of providing sex education.

Parents know and understand more about the importance of sex education for their children.

Parents have knowledge about sex education that should be given to their children.

Children understand the impact of sex on their lives, and help provide an understanding of gender differences.

Children can maintain the desire to explore things about sex by using pornographic prevention materials or providing sex education.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

5.1. Conclusion

From the qualitative research that has been carried out using the method of observation and interviews with Mrs. A (Respondent), Mr. W (Respondent's husband) and Mrs. S (Respondent's mother) who are parents and grandmother of children named SAS and SAF who are 5 years old. From the interviews, it was found that the respondents played an active role in providing sex education to their children, respondents always provided sex education by not allowing their two children not to use towels when they came

out of the bathroom and always providing education before going to bed, in providing sex education. The respondent is assisted by her husband when bathing the child, playing with the child, and at the right time, the respondent's husband will provide sex education.

Respondent's mother as the grandmother of the respondent's child, has a role in providing advice and experience on sex education to the respondent and the respondent's husband, it can be concluded that the respondent, her husband and her mother have provided sex education as early as possible and have good cooperation in providing sex education for their children and grandchildren.

It can be concluded that each statement from the respondent, her husband, and her mother has no difference so that it can be said that the statements from the respondents are true regarding giving sex education as early as possible to their children.

5.2. Suggestions

Hopefully, parents can continue to provide knowledge about sex education to their children. In the future parents can make special effort to improve children's well-being, especially in matters of sex by providing and teaching sex education to children starting from early age. Hopefully, in the end the child can show good behavior and morals in their association with their family, school, and community.

Future research is expected to use other methods to get better results and find efforts that can be better understood by people with pre-elementary school childrens in providing information on sex to their children at early ages.

Children have the desire to know sex naturally, because it is in their nature. Sex education that is currently implemented is only an introduction to gender differences, sexual organs, forms of violation, danger or impact. In order to satisfy their curiosity, children will independently try to find other knowledge themselves. Access to information so far has been facilitated through technological advances, making children learn more about sex from the internet and television which are lacking of moral values. So that information about values and norms are needed, as well as religion. A set of norms is usually able to bind people and provide inner peace, which can also positively influence their behaviors.

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