



Early Childhood Sex Education to Prevent Sexual Abuse

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Abstract: Cases of sexual harassment are currently receiving serious attention because they often occur in various environments, including play areas, schools and families. This research aims to investigate the role of parents and teachers, as well as the strategies, methods and materials taught in the learning process at Al Muhajirin Kindergarten, Malang City. The type of research carried out was qualitative research with descriptive methods. Data collection was carried out through interviews and observations. The results of this study illustrate that sex education from an early age has a significant role. Educational institutions and the role of parents have a big influence on children's understanding of sex education.

Keywords: Sex Education, Early Childhood, Sexual Harassment

Introduction

Children at an early age are experiencing a critical developmental stage, where they begin to form an understanding of the world around them, including their bodies and sexual identity. Correctly delivered and supportive sex education can help them develop positive attitudes towards their bodies and sexuality. Children at this age are vulnerable to becoming victims of sexual abuse because of their limitations in understanding inappropriate situations or responding appropriately. Sex education can act as a tool to provide children with an understanding of healthy boundaries and how to protect themselves.

Cases of sexual harassment are currently of concern to the Ministry of Social Affairs. These cases occur frequently in play areas, school environments, and even family school environments. Currently, the condition of children, especially minors, is very worrying, vulnerable to bullying and sexual violence (Masruroh et al., 2022). Children can be victims or perpetrators of bullying and sexual violence. This case often occurs every year, the last one occurring on April 5 2022, a 12 year old girl was raped by her biological father until she was 8 months pregnant in Muara Kaman District, Kutai Kartanegara, East Kalimantan (TV, 2022). Thus, sexual harassment in Indonesia is growing so that it can threaten the life of the nation and state because it results in psychological trauma to children.

Understanding sex in early childhood has great significance. Wu & Lee (2020) conducted research in Taiwan which showed that the risk of children experiencing bad sexual experiences or sexual abuse at an early age can have an impact on the child's development into adulthood. The research results found that girls who experienced this experience tended to be less assertive and had slightly lower self-esteem compared to boys. Additionally, both girls and boys may experience a gradual increase in symptoms of depression, social anxiety, and social loneliness from ages 9 to 18 (Wu & Lee, 2020). Therefore, providing sex education from an early age is very important to prevent the risk of children experiencing bad sexual experiences or sexual violence.

However, there are still many parents who consider sex education a taboo topic for their children at an early age. They see that sex education should only be given to children who are adults or at least teenagers. However, many factors can cause acts of sexual harassment and/or deviation, so the role of parents in forming awareness of sexual health and safety needs is very important. Parents have a major role in providing sexual education to their children. Through open and honest communication, parents can help children understand basic concepts about bodies, privacy, and boundaries. Additionally, parents are responsible for protecting children from the potential risk of sexual abuse by providing a clear understanding of inappropriate behavior. Apart from parents, teachers and schools also have an important role in early childhood sex education. They can create a curriculum

that supports positive sexual understanding, teaches about privacy, and provides information about children's rights. Teachers can create a safe and supportive school environment, where children feel comfortable talking about their questions or concerns.

Collaboration between parents and teachers plays a key role in delivering comprehensive sex education. Open communication between the two can ensure consistency and support for the messages conveyed to children, supporting their development. As previously explained, the implementation of sex education for early childhood has been implemented in various educational institutions, including the Al Muhajirin Kindergarten in Malang City. The selection of this research location was motivated by the unique approach applied by the Al Muhajirin Kindergarten in Malang City in providing sex education to young children, including the role of parents, strategies, methods and materials integrated into the learning process.

Methodology

The type of research applied is qualitative research, which is an inductive approach focused on the exploration and interpretation of a research problem (Creswell, 2015). The research subjects consisted of 25 parents and teachers at Al Muhajirin Kindergarten, Malang City. The duration of the research covers a period of one month, namely in November 2024 at Al Muhajirin Kindergarten, Malang City. The research method used is descriptive, which is carried out by explaining in detail the conditions observed without manipulating the research subjects (Sugiyono, 2017). This research focuses on the analysis and description of the importance of early childhood sex education, including the role of parents and teachers, strategies, methods and materials that are integrated into the learning process at Al Muhajirin Kindergarten, Malang City. Teachers and parents were research subjects, and data was collected through interviews and observations using triangulation. The data analysis technique refers to the Miles and Huberman model, where analysis is carried out interactively and continuously until the data is deemed valid. The data analysis process involves three main stages, namely (1) data reduction, (2) data presentation, and (3) drawing conclusions.

Result and Discussion

Based on data from interviews conducted with parents of students, it is clear that in general, parents and teachers consider sex education to be important and urgent to be given to children from an early age. The high number of cases of child sexual abuse released by KPAI in 2018 was 393 cases (Azzahra, 2020). Therefore, it is very important to provide an understanding of sex to children, namely by providing sex education to children at an early age. It is hoped that understanding sex education will enable children to obtain the right information about sex. Sex education is providing information to children and forming beliefs about sex, such as sexual identity, sexual anatomy, reproductive health, emotional

relationships (Adhani and Ayui, 2018). Sex education for children at this age is one of the most important parts of education that should be conveyed to children as early as possible.

Based on the results of interviews with parents and teachers, it is currently recognized that the introduction and learning of Sex Education in early childhood is considered important and urgent. However, there are a number of parents who still feel that this is not important and even consider it a taboo subject to discuss with their children. The results of interviews with parents of Al Muhajirin Kindergarten students in Malang City show that some of them still view Sex Education with a narrow perception. They tend to only limit their understanding of sex education to matters related to the reproductive organs, without realizing that early childhood sex education involves broader aspects, including the formation of children's personalities. This narrow perception also has an impact on their understanding of identity and sex roles which are related to societal norms and religious values.

The increasing awareness regarding sex education in early childhood seems to face obstacles in the form of limited perceptions regarding sex education itself. Parents' perceptions of the concept of sex education influence the goals of that education. Many parents tend to see the aim of sex education only from the aspect of sexual behavior, without understanding that the main aim of sex education, especially in early childhood, is to create a sense of comfort so that they can carry out activities according to their gender. As stated by E. Saringendyanti W. (1998: 20), sex education has a broader dimension, including social dimensions related to a person's character, qualities, attitudes and behavior in carrying out their sexual roles. Despite this, the perception of parents of Al Muhajirin Kindergarten students in Malang City is still focused on aspects of sexual behavior such as free sex and sexual behavior that is considered deviant. This is reflected in the results of interviews with a number of parents.

Children's knowledge about sex education is not only theoretical, but also about how this knowledge can be applied in everyday life, as expressed by Abdullah Nashih Ulwan (1999: 2002). The importance of selecting sex education materials for young children must be considered and adapted to their level of development. One important aspect in sex education for young children is the identification of body parts. This emphasis was found based on the views of Jatmikowati, et al (2015), Azzahra (2020), and Aziz (2014). Jatmikowati, et al (2015) stated that material about body parts helps children recognize the name and function of each body part, as well as understand the differences between female and male body organs. Introduction to sex in children begins with understanding the anatomy or structure of the body parts. Azzahra (2020) added that as a step to prevent and handle sexual violence against children, parents and teachers can provide sexual education with the material "my bodies belong to me" (my body is mine). This guide aims to provide

children with an understanding of the names of body parts, how to care for body organs, prevention, and how to deal with situations that make them uncomfortable.

Besides that, based on the findings of this research, it turns out that not all Early Childhood Education (PAUD) teachers fully understand sex education material for early childhood. Teachers' understanding regarding sex education for early childhood is still limited and general in nature, without delving into the substance of sex education itself. The majority of teachers' understanding focuses more on emphasizing body parts that need to be protected and the need for toilet training for young children. In general, teachers at Al Muhajirin Kindergarten in Malang City are aware of the importance of providing sex education to students, even from an early age. This view is in line with the perspective of Ratnasari and Alias (2016, 55), who emphasize that it is very important to implement sex education from an early age. They argue that children's knowledge of sex can prevent sexual deviations and protect children from potential sexual abuse. Sex education is also considered to be able to help children understand the limits of behavior that falls into the category of sexual harassment. In addition, knowledge about sex can also prevent children from exploring behavior that should not be appropriate for their age level due to a lack of understanding.

Awareness of the importance of sex education for Early Childhood Children (AUD) in Al Muhajirin Kindergarten, Malang City is apparently not in line with its implementation in the school environment. It is possible that this is caused by the school's concern about the taboo that parents may feel regarding sex education for AUD. Apart from that, not all Early Childhood Education (PAUD) teachers are considered to understand sex education material for early childhood in depth. Even though teachers realize the importance of understanding the content of sex education for AUD in order to provide it more clearly, in reality their understanding is still brief or general. This situation makes teachers reluctant to provide comprehensive sex education to children.

This finding is consistent with the views of Roqib (2008, 6) who emphasizes that sex education for early childhood requires depth in the material to suit the needs, age, and level of understanding and maturity of the child. Apart from that, a communicative and effective delivery strategy or technique is also needed. This is supported by the research results of Aji, et al. (2018, 116) who concluded that one of the main obstacles faced by teachers and parents in delivering sex education to young children is their readiness to obtain sufficient information related to sexual education.

In the context of sex education, according to Ratnasari and Alias (2016, 57), in the age range of 3 to 5 years, it is recommended to teach children about body organs and the function of each organ. When bathing a child, it is the right moment to introduce his genitals. It is important to avoid mentions that society considers impolite regarding children's genitals. For example, it's best to use appropriate terms like "vagina" or "penis" rather than

informal words like "apem" or "bird." However, there is no need to discuss the child's gender in too much detail or involve him in too serious a learning situation.

Apart from that, according to Ratnasari and Alias (2016, 57), it is important to provide children with an understanding of their body organs, including the genitals, which are their private parts that need to be well looked after. Therefore, children need to be taught not to show their genitals carelessly. Thus, teachers are expected to have sufficient understanding regarding sex education and its content. Through the implementation of sex education for early childhood in schools, it is hoped that students can understand the boundaries regarding which parts of the body (physical) can be touched by other people and which are not allowed. As stated by Chomaria (2014, 8), sex education should start by introducing body parts. Gradually, children will realize that the vagina and penis not only function as channels for urinating, but also as organs that play an important role in the reproductive process. Parents or educators can provide information about the impacts that children will experience as they grow. One method for conveying sexual education to children is to teach them how to clean their own genitals. Sex education can also be implemented through toilet learning training from the age of 2 years, where children are taught to be independent in cleaning themselves after urinating or defecating. By teaching children to clean their genitals properly, both after urinating and defecating, children can become independent and do not need to depend on the help of others.

Conclusion

Findings from research on Early Childhood Sex Education to Prevent Sexual Abuse conclude that encouraging early sex education in children is very important. The role played by educational institutions and parents has a significant impact on children's understanding of sex education at an early age. Sex education for early childhood does not aim to teach children to have free sex in adulthood. On the other hand, sex education is aimed at making children understand the condition of their bodies, the body condition of the opposite sex, as well as training them to protect themselves and avoid potential sexual violence. The importance of choosing the right methods and materials in introducing sex education also needs to be considered. Sex education for early childhood can start with simple concepts such as introducing body anatomy, teaching how to reproduce living creatures (humans and animals), and guiding children to clean their genitals properly after urinating or defecating, and other aspects. These materials are then integrated into topics such as "Me and My Clothes," "Family and People Around Me," and "How to Care for and Look After My Body."

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