

Parents' Perceptions about Sexual Health Literacy for Early Childhood in Bandung City and Tobelo City

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Abstract

This study aims to reveal and compare parents' perceptions of sexual health literacy in Bandung City as a representative of a metropolitan city and Tobelo City as a representative of a small town. This research is qualitative research with a case study design. Data was taken by interviewing 26 informants consisting of 16 parents and 10 teachers from Pandu Kindergarten in Bandung City, Children's Faith Building School '7 Bunda Kedukaan' Church in Bandung City, Karmel Kindergarten in Tobelo City and Children & Youth Study Group 'Soli Deo Gloria' in Tobelo City. The result of the research showed that there is not much difference in perception between parents in Bandung City and Tobelo City. Parents from both cities think that sex education for early childhood is an important thing to give to children from the age of 3-5 years, even though there are differences in the taboos in the two cities. Parents in the city of Bandung think that sex education for young children must continue to be shared with family and relatives so that there are no longer taboo views so that children can receive good sex education. Meanwhile, parents in Tobelo City think that taboo views make parents rarely or never share information about sex education for early childhood with family and relatives. However, parents from both cities still provide sex education to their children so that children can avoid sexual violence. Sex education that has been given by parents to children is teaching children the differences between genders, teaching children which parts of the body should not be touched or shown to other people, and toilet training. Parents also agree that if schools provide sex education to students, it will provide good benefits for their children.

Keywords: *Sexual Health Literacy, Early Childhood, Parental Perception*

INTRODUCTION

Literacy is how individuals find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others (National Institutes of Health, 2021). Health literacy about sex in early childhood will influence parental abilities in teaching health about sex or giving sex education to children in early childhood so that parents can equip their children with valuable knowledge and skills for a better look at sexual health. Educating yourself alone to get as much information as possible about sexuality will be beneficial for yourself and your children in Lots thing (Jovanovic, 2017).

The content of sexual health literacy for children is about sex education, which is understood as a process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical, and social aspects of sexuality. To equip children with knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that will empower them to realize their health, well-being, and dignity. By developing respectful social and sexual relationships, children can consider how their choices affect their well-being and the well-being of others and understand and ensure the protection of their rights throughout their lives (UNESCO, 2018).

Teaching correct sexual health requires a long process, starting from birth to the final teenage stage. Early sex education must be by the child's development, in the form of knowledge about the function of the reproductive organs and how to care for and maintain them so that it can prepare the child according to his age and can provide the child with an understanding of the condition of his body, a sense of the opposite sex, and an understanding of how to avoid sexual violence. As children get older, sex education also provides knowledge about how to socialize healthily and responsibly according to religious values and norms that apply in society (Nugraha & Wibisono, 2016).

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Sex education in the family is a critical key in equipping children with available information about sex, health, and reproduction problems in a correct way. Because of that, parents' abilities, skills, and willingness to understand health literacy about sex will determine the feelings and behavior of the child later in the future. Many problems occurred as a consequence of a lack of sex education in children; for example, sexual behavior deviance, sexual harassment, and promiscuous sexual life that spread among teenagers (Istiqomah et al., 2019).

The most influential figures in the optimal development of children's sexual life are parents. However, no one can deny that parents have lots of limitations in understanding and sharing health literacy about sex to children in the family. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization explained that taboo perceptions from parents and society about information or literacy, health, and sex become one hindering obstacle to the way education sex is taught to children. (UNESCO, 2018). As a result, many parents feel confused and uncomfortable talking about sexual health with children or consider that the child will know about itself later. Even the public thinks that talking about sex is the same as teaching children ways to copulate.

Assumptions like This precisely hinder the delivery process of sex education for children (Nugraha & Wibisono, 2016). Previews study states a connection between poor parental health literacy and health behavior in which children tend to be negative (De Buhr & Tannen, 2020). Another study states that there is a relationship between parental knowledge about sexual health in children aged 7-12 years and the prevention of sexual violence (Fisnawati et al., 2015). However, in Indonesia, 80% of mothers are not capable of giving education about sex at home. Parents do not know what is necessary and appropriate to deliver to their children because their knowledge about sexual health literacy is low. In 2006, 60% of mothers thought something related to sex is porn and taboo; when the child asks their parents about sex, general parents cannot answer it, answer it with anger, and consider the child is not polite. Only 25% of mothers want to explain sex in children (Susanti, 2020).

Based on the initial study survey conducted by (Ciptriasini et al., 2022) in Jakarta regarding the use of the Health Belief Model approach in providing sexual literacy to 10 female students at SDN Jakarta, it was found that 8 of them admitted that they had never received sex education from their parents. The study results from (Ali et al., 2018) in Yogyakarta concluded that elementary school students are aware of the changes in their bodies. However, they do not understand and are confused about how to care for and maintain the health of their bodies, specifically to protect themselves from sexual crimes. For this reason, previous researchers suggested the participation of parents and the community in learning about sex education so that in the future, it does not cause controversy because providing sexual information to children is still considered taboo by parents and society.

In terms of giving sex education to children, some schools in Bandung City have created special programs for sex education in early childhood; for example, research conducted by (Fauziah et al., 2023) explains that the sex education programs were carried out in one of the kindergartens in Bandung City carried out using audiovisual media with a question and answer method accompanied by a role-play method. Meanwhile, in Tobelo City, there is still no particular program for children aged early in school. Based on research conducted by (Pakey, 2016), giving sex education in Tobelo City is still difficult because there exists a taboo and lack of parental knowledge about sex education. Based on the issues presented, this research was conducted to uncover and compare parents' perceptions of health literacy about sex for young children in Bandung City and Tobelo City as representatives of metropolitan cities and small cities.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research is qualitative, with the research design used as a case study. The selection of informants was determined using a purposive sampling technique. The informant criteria for parents were a biological father or mother who has children of child-age early childhood education (0-5 years) and for teachers in kindergarten or equivalent. Informants were domiciled in Bandung City or Tobelo City. This study collected data from February 2024 to March 2024. Data collection techniques were carried out in 2 ways: Focus Group Discussion (FGD) through face-to-face FGD or video calls for parent informants and in-depth interviews through face-to-face or video calls for teacher informants. Data analysis in this study uses thematic analysis (TA). With thematic analysis, the researcher writes the transcript of the interview, reads the whole transcript, identifies the

theme, and searches for the theme throughout the transcript. Interviewing and writing end analysis in a narrative, which is the product of data processing, in-depth thinking, and reflection from the researcher.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Eight parents from Bandung City and eight from Tobelo City become informants in the study. The range of age of whole parent informants is 30-40 years, with only one informant from Bandung City in the 28-year-old. The range of final education for whole-parent informants is a high school – bachelor's degree. Most parent informants are housewives or entrepreneurs; others are government employers.

Five kindergarten teachers' children from Bandung City and five kindergarten teachers from Tobelo City became informants in the study. The teacher informants' age range is 24-58 years old. The teacher informant's education is a bachelor's degree.

Identified Themes

Six themes were found after analyzing the data obtained from FGDs and in-depth interviews. These themes reflect parents' perceptions about sexual health literacy for early childhood.

Limited Parental Knowledge About Sex Education for Early Childhood

Knowledge about what is necessary to be taught to children in early childhood related to sex education is an important thing. Without good knowledge, parents cannot give good sex education to their children. Based on the result of this study, parent informants in Bandung City and Tobelo City already know that education and sex are essential. The sex education provided by parent informants from both cities is to teach children the differences between genders and teach children which parts of the body should not be touched or shown to other people.

"Sex education in early childhood is an important thing because we must educate what is allowed and what is not can be shown to people other than their parents, for example, if my parents want to bathe my toddler child, it is ok, but I told my children first." (NW, 36 years old, parents in Bandung City)

"Sex education means telling the difference type gender, differences method the dress, the difference method poop, difference the toy, basically introduce children behave from their gender." (M, 42 years old, parents in Bandung City)

"Necessary knowledge given as early as maybe, about difference type gender, no undress carelessly, the part which body does not can touch." (LL, 33 years old, parent in Tobelo)

"Give knowledge to a child about the parts that cannot be touched by other people, especially by men" (EK, 35 years old, parent in Tobelo City)

When parents asked about toilet training, parent informants in both cities did not know that toilet training is also a part of sex education for children in early childhood. However, parent informants from both cities confess they give toilet training to their children.

"I just found out that toilet training is also sex education for a child, but I already bring child I to the toilet since she 1-2 years old." (IC, 35 years old, parents in Bandung City)

"Since my child has already started to talk about pees and paps, I bring my child to the bathroom, so when my child is around two years old, my child never wears diapers again. However, I just found out that toilet training is part of sex education for a child." (F, 32 years old, parents in Tobelo City)

For the best age when a child can get sex education, similar answers were also found from parents in Bandung City and Tobelo City. According to parent informants, children can start getting sex education around 3 years old.

"Should start from 3 years old before entering kindergarten." (V, 33 years old, parent in Bandung City)

"You can start since the child is 3 years old." (EK, 35 years old, parents in Tobelo City)

The Internet Is the Main Source of Information

Most parents in Bandung City and Tobelo City confess to getting information about sex education for early childhood via the internet, such as Google, YouTube, or social media like Instagram and Facebook.

"I got information from the internet like parenting content from Instagram or Google." (LS, 35 years old, parent in Bandung City)

"Most information can I get from a website, for example, YouTube, trends on social media, information about education sex you can search on the internet, so I can be updated continue." (KS, 28 years old, parent in Bandung City)

"The internet is easy to access anytime. I can get information from social media such as Instagram, Facebook or Google." (F, 32 years old, parents in Tobelo City)

"I am normally looking for information from the internet, from Google or social media." (EK, 35 years old, parent in Tobelo City)

Only three informants confessed to getting information about sex education for early childhood from parenting books besides the internet or social media.

"I got information about sex education through books like parenting books, then from the internet and social media." (NW, 36 years old, parent in Bandung City)

"Normally I can get information from books and the internet." (LL, 33 years old, parents in Tobelo City)

"I get information most from parenting books and the internet." (SB, 34 years old, parent in Tobelo City)

Taboo Views Regarding Sex Education Information for Early Childhood

In Indonesia, there is often still a taboo view when discussing sex with children. When asked about parents' willingness to provide sex education to children, willingness to seek information, and sharing information regarding sex education for early childhood, there were different answers from parent informants in Bandung City and Tobelo City. Parent informants from Bandung City agreed to provide, seek, and share information on sex education for early childhood with their friends, family, and relatives.

"In my opinion, it is essential to provide sex education to children, so that there are no longer taboo views, I want to provide sex education to children and want to share this information with friends/relatives." (NW, 36 years old, parents in Bandung City)

"Children should be given knowledge about sex, we can and should talk about sexual health with relatives, I want to share information with friends, even though it is difficult because nowadays I rarely see friends." (N, 37 years old, parents in Bandung City)

Meanwhile, most parent informants from Tobelo City want to provide sex education to their children, and they also want to seek sexual health information for early childhood. However, most of the informants did not want to share sex education information with their friends, family, and relatives because in their environment, they rarely or never talked about sexual health.

"If we talk about sexual health or sex education, in Tobelo, it is still considered taboo, so it is rare to share it with family, maybe close friends. If I am looking for sex education, I want to know how to teach it to children." (LL, 33 years old, parents in Tobelo City)

"I never give sex education to my children because, as my parents taught me, I never discuss sex with my children. Like the opinion of Mrs. LL, it is still taboo for parents in Tobelo to talk about sex. The children will find out for themselves, like my child, she can understand for herself; for example, do not take off his clothes in front of other people, so he never finds out or shares about sexual health like that." (LAT, 47 years old, parent in Tobelo City)

Information obtained from parent informants in Bandung City and Tobelo City aligns with information provided by teacher informants. According to teachers from Bandung City, parents are very enthusiastic about getting related seminars about sexual health or sex education for early childhood.

"At the school, a seminar was held about sexual health for children, inviting psychologists as speakers. Indeed, the title was not directly about sex education, but parents were very enthusiastic, and sometimes, some asked when a seminar like this would be held again. During the seminar, many parents also asked about ways to provide sex education for children." (MC, 42 years old, teacher in Bandung City)

Meanwhile, in Tobelo City, teacher informants said they had never provided information about sex education for early childhood to their parents because sexual health is still rarely discussed in Tobelo City. Even though schools have never provided information about sex education to parents, teachers provide it to students, and no parents have ever refused.

"So far, we have only given sexual health education to children, but it has never been held to parents because once a child asked me why his parents were hugging, then I asked his parents, but the child's parents became awkward, maybe because of discussions about things like this still considered taboo." (FCS, 36 years old, teacher in Tobelo City)

"I once gave an introduction to body parts to a child, but the parents did not give any response. It seems that for parents talking about sexual health is still considered embarrassing to talk about." (IL, 35 years old, teacher in Tobelo City)

Parental Barriers in Giving Sex Education to Early Childhood

Apart from being taboo in society, providing sex education to young children has various difficulties. Parent informants in Bandung City and Tobelo City gave similar answers. The informants think the main difficulty is that children cannot quickly grasp the information their parents give.

"The problem is that it is difficult to talk to children, it is difficult for children under 5 years to be told, so it seems difficult for children to grasp information." (CH, 38 years old, parents in Bandung City)

"It has been explained many times, for example, don't take off your clothes carelessly, but my child likes to forget, or maybe she doesn't understand my explanation, so when she wants to pee, her clothes are all taken off in public places." (V, 33 years old, parent in Bandung City)

"Children do not catch the information we have given, so I must tell him over and over again. I think he is too lazy to listen because he cannot understand it." (LL, 33 years old, parent in the city Tobelo)

"Finding language that is easy for children to understand is difficult because young children still cannot immediately understand what we say." (L, 32 years old, parents in Tobelo City)

Other obstacles include confusion in using media to provide information to children, lack of knowledge about sex education for early childhood, and confusion about when to start providing sex education to children.

"Don't know when to give information to children, so at what age they should get the information, how to tell them, what media to use, that's what's confusing." (V, 33 years old, parent in Bandung City)

"Because of minimal knowledge about sexual health, it's also hard to give knowledge to the child." (SB, 34 years old, parents in Tobelo City)

"I still don't understand what needs to be said to children, for an early age, what kind of sex education should be taught, then when my child has questions, for example, he asks why there are babies, I'm confused about explaining it." (MW, 31 years old, parent in Tobelo City)

Teacher informants in Bandung City and Tobelo City gave similar answers. The main difficulty was that children could not immediately understand the information provided by the teacher.

"Kindergarten age children still have difficulty understanding what is being taught, so we teach the children with songs so they are easier to remember." (MC, 42 years old, teacher in Bandung City)

"Children don't understand right away, so we teach through songs, for example, the song 'pat protection'." (FCS, 36 years old, teacher in Tobelo City)

If Teachers Provide Sex Education for Early Childhood, It Will Be Better

Based on information from teacher informants in both Bandung City and Tobelo City, sex education for early childhood that is distributed in schools is a way for children to protect themselves, gender differences, and toilet training.

"At school, we teach children to be able to protect themselves, which parts of the body can be touched, even if it's fellow children, they have to know which parts of the body can be touched and which ones can't, we teach them through songs, for example, 'don't touch them', then children are taught not to carelessly taking off clothes, how to go to the toilet, so at the beginning of the school year children are given toilet training, the toilets for girls and boys are also different, teachers also teach children who cannot go to the toilet on their own." (MC, 42 years old, teacher in Bandung City)

"At school, we teach it starting from the simple things first, for example, which parts of the body should not be touched, we have a song, namely 'pat protection', sung every day in class, then toilet training is taught at the beginning of the school year, so at school children try to no diapers, toilets for men and women are also differentiated." (STF, 47 years old, teacher in Tobelo City)

For parent informants in Bandung City and Tobelo City, sex education must be given to children starting from home. However, they agree that if schools provide sex education to children at school, the children will get more benefits.

"In my opinion, children should be taught this from a young age at home, it's more private, but at school, they teach toilet training too, that will help children because at school it is constantly repeated, so my child more easily to remember." (IC, 35 years old, parent in Bandung City)

"In my opinion, if it is given in schools, it is good because teachers are experts so they understand better what they want to teach children." (KS, 28 years old, parents in Bandung City)

"It's best to do it at home for the first time, especially if the mother gives it to her child because the mother is the closest person to her child. Then continue after school age, get lessons at school so that children understand more easily." (F, 32 years old, parent in Tobelo City)

"At school, it is beneficial for children to be taught to protect themselves, so we no longer need to give sex education like that. It has been taught at school, and my child comes home already understanding it. Sometimes, my child tells me what she learned at school, for example, not taking off her clothes carelessly." (LAT, 47 years old, parent in Tobelo City)

Factors That Encourage Parents to Give Sex Education to Early Childhood

There were various answers given by parent informants regarding the reasons for continuing to provide sex education to their children. The most frequent reason is because of the large number of cases of sexual crimes committed by children. Another reason is the sophistication of technology and the embarrassment of the surrounding social environment.

"Current environmental conditions have much sexual abuse happening to children, so children need to be given knowledge from an early age according to their age." (LS, 35 years old, parent in Bandung City)

"Now there is much negative content even when watching children's films, suddenly an adult advertisement appears, so children should be told about sexual health so that girls know how to protect themselves, they also know the difference between boy and girl because nowadays there sexual deviant like that." (IC, 35 years old, parent in Bandung City)

"Sex knowledge is important to avoid undesirable things such as pedophilia and child abuse." (F, 32 years old, parent in Tobelo City)

"In my opinion, children should be given sexual health education because there is much sexual violence, and on the internet, there is also negative content like sexual deviation, so we have to protect children from an early age by providing teachings about sexual health, providing sex education like that." (LL, 33 years old, parents in Tobelo City)

Teacher informants gave similar answers, the rise of sexual violence and the advancement of the internet were the main reasons teachers provided sex education to students.

"Nowadays there is much news about cases of sexual violence, plus there is much negative content on the internet for children. Children now understand technology from a very young age. For example, from YouTube, children can be exposed to negative content, so they must be taught how to protect themselves and respect their friends too, for example, it is not permissible to "holding a friend's private parts. There are also cases of child abuse committed by children too." (MC, 42 years old, teacher in Bandung City)

"Because the number of cases of sexual abuse against children has recently increased, it is important to provide sex education to children from an early age to avoid the risks that children can experience in the future." (STF, 47 years old, teacher in Tobelo City)

"It must be given to children. Nowadays, there is much sexual violence, and children can also be exposed to pornography, maybe not adult pornography, but like seeing kissing on the internet or TV, children don't understand that yet, so it must be explained that it is not permissible to do that to their friends, and people are not allowed to touch parts of the body covered by clothing or kiss them, let alone strangers, sometimes even people the child already knows can sexually abuse the child, so don't let our children be exposed to sexual violence." (FCS, 36 years old, teacher in Tobelo City)

In the first theme, "Limited parental knowledge about sex education for early childhood," there is no difference in parents' knowledge in metropolitan and small cities because parent informants in Bandung City and Tobelo City gave the same answer. Parent informants think sex education is an important thing to give to children from an early age. However, parents only know that sex education for early childhood is teaching gender differences, how to behave according to their gender, and teaching children which parts of the body should not be touched or shown to other people. For parents, children can receive sex education at the age of 3-5 years. Meanwhile, for toilet training, parents think that toilet training should be given since the child is around one year old, but parents do not know that toilet training is part of sex education that must be given in early childhood.

The results of this study are in line with the results of the previous study, which stated that parents think sex education for early childhood is important. However, parents are still confused about providing sex education due to a lack of knowledge (Rakhmawati et al., 2021). Sex education given by parents to young children is limited to simply introducing body anatomy (names of body parts) and their functions to children, explaining the differences in body parts between men and women to children, teaching children how to dress properly, covering the private parts, and explaining how to socialize or be friends properly with members of the same sex and the opposite sex (Hasiana, 2020). Meanwhile, regarding the age at which parents can provide sex education to children, previous research states that children can receive sex education from the age of 1 year (Chairilisyah, 2019). However, in another previous study, it was stated that for parents in Indonesia, for sexual health information regarding knowledge of body parts, 67% of parents answered that it could be given at the age of starting kindergarten - 3 years, 23% answered that it could be given at the age of 4-6 years old, 9% answered that it could be given at 7-9 years old, and 1% answered that it could be given at 10-12 years old (Leowalu & Hendriks, 2021). Another previous study states that parents in Malaysia provide sex education since children are 0-5 years old, with the teaching given to children is the correct name for their genitals, limits on unnecessary touching of private areas, and the child's right to refuse if someone touches touching their certain body parts (Fideyah et al, 2020).

Theoretically, sex education can start when children are still babies. For example, when breastfeeding and bathing, children are introduced to feelings of affection through touch, caress, and parental behavior. At 0-1 years old, parents can introduce the names of body organs and their functions in simple terms. At the age of 2-3 years, parents can start introducing the function of the genitals and carrying out toilet training. At this age, parents can also teach children actions that lead to abuse so that children can avoid acts of abuse. When the age of 4 is reached, parents can introduce family formation and the various types of affectionate touch (kissing or hugging) permitted and those that are not permitted (Wahyuni, 2024). At the age of 3-4 years, sometimes children can start playing with their genitals; even children aged 4-5 years can masturbate. At the age of 3-4 years, children also begin to question their sexual identity and begin to have various activities outside the home, which require children to be able to use the toilet themselves or dress modestly. Therefore, parents need to

start sex education as early as possible and prepare themselves to deal with children's behavior, such as masturbation (Jovanovic, 2017).

In the second theme, "The Internet is the main source of information," parents in metropolitan cities and small towns obtain no different sources of information. Based on this study's results, the primary source of information for parent informants in Bandung City and Tobelo City comes from the Internet. Social media and search engines used by parents are Google, YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook. Only one informant from Bandung City and two informants from Tobelo City admitted to reading parenting books as an additional source of information.

The results of this study are in line with a previous study conducted by (Fideyah et al., 2020), which states that 75% of parent respondents reported obtaining sexual information from the Internet, and around 36.5% stated that this information came from their parents. A study by (Apriliani & Utami, 2021) also states that most parents get knowledge about children's health from YouTube and the Internet. However, the results of this research are different from the results of research conducted by (Shin et al., 2019), which stated that 49% of parents got information about sex education from seminars or training; in second place were 27.6% of parents who said they got sex education information from the internet, and the rest got information from hospitals, books, friends, and so on.

In this study, several parents stated that current advances in the internet make it easier for them to search for health information. In line with a previous study from (Asgharinekah et al., 2019), which stated that the development of the internet and satellites help parents in answering children's questions regarding sexual health according to the child's age, even the internet can be a medium for providing information such as training packages on how to provide sex education for children. A study conducted by (Jati, 2021) states that the nature of online media provides fast, reliable user access and has more attractive features than print media such as books or magazines. Mothers can also access books, magazines, and even research journals via online media, so the internet is an effective solution for searching and sharing information for millennial mothers. Parents can get information about education sex Not only from books but also from the fact that These advances in the internet make it possible for parents to access supporting sites for sex education and information about sex education (Jovanovic, 2017).

In the third theme, "Taboo views regarding sex education information for early childhood," It was found that there were differences of opinion between parent informants in Bandung City and Tobelo City regarding the taboo view of sexual health literacy for early childhood. Parents in Bandung City can find, understand, and share sex education information with their children and others. Almost all parent informants in Bandung City think that sexual health information for young children should be sought, understood, and shared so that taboos in society disappear because sexual health information given to children from an early age can protect children from sexual violence in the future. Parents in Tobelo City are also able to find and understand sexual health information for young children and are willing to share sexual health information with their children. However, when it comes to sharing information about sex education for early childhood with other people, most parents in Tobelo City admit that they have never done this because it is still taboo in society. Based on information from parent informants in Tobelo City, they admitted that for a long time, their parents had never even talked about sex education, such as gender recognition or teaching children not to take off their clothes carelessly, because it was thought when children got older, children would understand themselves and talking about sexual health was considered an unusual thing.

The results of this study from parent informants in Bandung City are in line with a study conducted by (Sidabutar, 2021), which states that parents agree that young children gain knowledge about sexual health and think that providing sex education from an early age is a natural and normal thing. Meanwhile, the results of this study from parent informants in Tobelo City are in line with a study conducted by (Hardini et al., 2022), which states that some parents think that discussing sex education in early childhood is still a taboo topic to discuss. Another previous study stated that 58% of parents believed that it was not necessary to teach children to look after their reproductive organs from an early age; this could be influenced by parents' views that it is not appropriate for young children to know about this (Sitio et al., 2020).

The United Nation Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization explained that parents and society's taboo view regarding sexual health information itself is one of the obstacles that hinders the implementation of sex education for children. (UNESCO, 2018). A previous study stated that family-based sex education is important, but cultural taboos in some communities can be quite an essential obstacle in implementing sex education for children (Asgharinekah et al, 2020). Parents' perceptions of sexual health, which is still taboo to discuss, must be eliminated first in order to provide good sex education for children. If parents have negative perceptions and there is still a taboo, then these parents cannot explain to their children about sex education itself (Ciptiasrini & Astarie, 2020).

In the fourth theme, "Parental barriers in giving sex education to early childhood," it was found that there were no differences in opinion between parent informants in metropolitan cities and small cities. Barriers for parent informants in Bandung City and Tobelo City in sharing information about sex education with young children are children who cannot grasp the information quickly, lack of knowledge about sex education for early childhood, confusion about using media to provide information to children, and confusion about when to start providing sexual health knowledge to the child.

The results of this study are in line with a previous study, which stated that although parents already understand how to provide sexual health knowledge in the form of sex education for early childhood, parents do not directly provide it because parents still do not understand what methods should be used for early sex education can be conveyed well to children from parents (Masitoh & Hidayat, 2020). Another study by (Shin et al, 2019) stated that although parents know the importance of sex education, some parents do not provide sex education because they do not know how to provide sex education to young children. (Pradikto et al., 2020) stated that parents tend to understand the importance of sex education for early childhood but are still confused about how to carry it out and implement it for children according to their growth and development. A study conducted by (Hardini et al, 2022) also states that parents feel confused or have difficulty about how parents convey to young children about sexual health. In this study, several parents also stated that they had difficulty answering several questions asked by their children, for example, why there was a baby. This is in line with a previous study that states that even though parents have received training on how to provide sex education, parents often feel confused about answering children's questions, such as pregnancy (Rakhmawati et al., 2021).

Theoretically, humans often feel afraid of their responsibilities as parents, and talking about sex to their children is one of the main fears for parents. Sometimes, to cover up fear or embarrassment when discussing sexual health, parents say that their children are still too young and find it challenging to understand sex education, so they wait for their children to talk about it first, which makes parents too late in sharing sexual health knowledge with their children (Jovanovic, 2017). The key to starting sexual health knowledge with children is to establish good communication from the time the child is born. Parents can make sex education a place for joint learning between parents and children. Therefore, parents must be willing to continue learning related to sex education (Nugraha & Wibisono, 2016)

In the fifth theme, "If teachers provide sex education for early childhood, it will be better," in this study, it is known that there are no differences in opinion between parents in metropolitan cities and small cities. Parent informants in Bandung City and Tobelo City think it is very good if their children receive sex education at school because teachers are considered experts in teaching sexual health so that children understand better. Apart from that, parents think that toilet training is taught at school, and the school's request that children not wear diapers to school makes their children take off diapers more quickly, making it easier for parents to provide toilet training. The sex education material given at school to children is about how children can protect themselves, gender differences, and toilet training.

The results of this study are in line with a previous study, which stated that the majority of parents in Indonesia strongly support school-based sexual education and are very open to providing sexual health material to children from the early age of entering school (Leowalu et al., 2021). It is also very helpful for parents if schools provide sex education to children and are willing to provide training for parents to carry out sex education so that parents understand better what should be taught to children and can strengthen the sex education that has been given by the school to children (Rakhmawati et al, 2021). Another previous study states that most parents

still depend on schools to provide sex education to their children because parents think schools know better how to provide sexual health information to children (Masitoh & Hidayat, 2020).

A literature review conducted by (Wulandari & Lestari, 2023) stated that the role of teachers in delivering material regarding sexual education to children is important because teachers are educators for children at school; with repeated delivery and interesting methods, children can understand more of the material presented. Sex education will be more effective if parents and schools can work together through several programs, such as active dialogue, parenting programs, and ongoing assistance regarding sex education both at school and at home (Windiastuti & Syamsudin, 2020). Home is the first environment where children learn about sex education; the next environment is school. Therefore, sex education must also be shared by schools (Nugraha & Wibisono, 2016). In 2018, UNESCO published international technical guidance on sexuality education, which was developed to assist educational institutions, health, and other relevant authorities in developing and implementing school-based comprehensive sexuality education programs or for other institutions outside of schools that wish to provide sex education. According to (UNESCO, 2018), schools, as places for teaching, learning, and children's self-development, are important in sharing sex education information. Schools can provide infrastructure, including space and teachers as a skilled and trusted source of information. Schools can also act as social support centers, connecting children, parents, families, and communities with other services (such as health services).

In the sixth theme, "Factors that encourage parents to give sex education to early childhood," in this study, in this study, it was found that there were no differences in opinion between parents in metropolitan cities and small cities. Parent informants in Bandung City and Tobelo City think that the increasing number of cases of sexual crimes committed by children, the increasingly rapid sophistication of technology so that children are afraid of seeing pornographic content on the internet, and the feeling of shame from the surrounding environment if children undress carelessly are the reasons why parents want to provide sex education to their children.

This result of this study are in line with the results of several previous studies. (Windiastuti & Syamsudin, 2020) stated that parents believe that sex education is an effort to prevent sexual harassment that could occur to children. (Hasiana, 2020) stated that parents want to provide knowledge about sexual health because of the fear of child kidnapping or sexual harassment and the fear of adult content on the internet. (Fideyah et al, 2020) stated that parents agree that good sex education can prevent children from various sexual crimes. Another study conducted by (Sitio et al, 2020) stated that it is important for parents to accompany their children while watching television or the internet because television and the internet are also the causes of rapid sexual knowledge for children, including at toddler age. If, by chance, the child sees "loving" or dating scenes in cartoons or advertising, parents must explain that this behavior is inappropriate. This is one thing that encourages parents to provide sexual health knowledge to young children.

A literature review conducted by (Hidayati & Nurhafizah, 2022) stated that the introduction of sex education in early childhood is very good for reducing cases of sexual abuse in children. The communication that occurs when parents provide sex education is also very useful because children are taught to tell their parents everything that happens to them; with this, it is hoped that parents can supervise their children to avoid sexual violence. Theoretically, the main aim of sex education for early childhood is to protect children from sexual abuse because children at an early age can mistakenly think that a hug or touch given by another person is the same as that given by their parents. However, it turns out to be a tendency to sexual harassment; the child may only feel uncomfortable when rape occurs. It often happens that the perpetrator of sexual abuse is someone the child knows or someone close to them, for example, a household assistant, driver, neighbor, teacher, or even a close relative such as an uncle (Wahyuni, 2024). Sex education for children also aims to enable children to form respectful and healthy relationships with family members, peers, friends, and in the future, with their life partners (UNESCO, 2018).

CONCLUSION

Personal health literacy is how individuals find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others. In this study, we want to compare parents' perceptions

of Bandung City as a representative of a metropolitan city and Tobelo City as a representative of a small city regarding sexual health literacy for early childhood. The results show that there are not many differences in perceptions between parents in Bandung City and Tobelo City. In terms of finding information, parents from both cities thought they wanted to find and learn about sexual health/sex education for early childhood. The internet is the main source of information for parent informants from both cities. In terms of understanding, parents from both cities think that sexual health for early childhood is an important thing to give to children from the age of 3-5 years, even though there are differences in taboos in the two cities. Parents in Bandung City believe that sex education for young children must continue to be shared with family and relatives so that there are no longer taboo views so that children can get good sexual health information. Meanwhile, parents in Tobelo City believe that taboo views make parents rarely or never share sexual health information for young children with family and relatives. In terms of using information, parents from both cities continue to provide sexual health information/sex education to their children so that children can avoid sexual violence. The information that parents have given to children is teaching children the differences between genders, teaching children which parts of the body should not be touched or shown to other people, and toilet training. Parents also agree that the sex education provided by schools to children provides good benefits for children; for example, it becomes easier for children to understand which parts of the body are not to be touched, not to undress carelessly, and to take off diapers more quickly. It is hoped that the results of this study will add insight to education, school, and health services, for example, advocating for schools to conduct training programs or seminars for parents on sex education for early childhood so that the delivery of sex education for early childhood can be more optimal.

Limitations

This case study research only compared the experiences of parents from Bandung City and Tobelo City while providing sex education to their children. The researcher also admitted that there were obstacles in equalizing the informants' free time, and the long distance from the research location and the costs of conducting research became additional research limitations.

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