



The Role of Parents Early Childhood Sexual Education in Indonesia: Reconstructing and Rethinking

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Abstract. In Indonesia, an increasing number of parents recognize the importance of sexual education for children; however, discussing this topic, especially concerning gender, remains challenging due to prevailing taboos. Paradoxically, the surge in child sexual abuse incidents accentuates the urgency for comprehensive sexual education. This article aims to explore the pivotal role of parents in executing sexual education for young children. Drawing on Foucault's poststructuralist feminist theory of power relations, a qualitative approach with a case study design is employed. The study was conducted in a district within Depok, West Java, Indonesia, focusing on young parents with firstborn children aged 3 to 6 years. Respondents were selected through purposive sampling, targeting mothers and fathers aged 25 to 34 years. The findings in this study reveal that parents already have awareness about the importance of sexual education but are limited to the inherent culture of gender language which is still considered taboo and language associated with gender is connoted as dirty language. Navigating the landscape of sexual education for young children in Indonesia involves reconciling cultural taboos with the pressing need for comprehensive knowledge.

Keywords: sex education, early children, constructing, feminist post structuralist

1 Introduction

Sexual violence against children is a global and widespread problem, because it is very detrimental to individuals and society at large [1]. Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) have a mandate to require countries to eliminate violence against children, including sexual violence against children. Several other international organizations such as WHO, UNICEF and the World Bank developed the "INSPIRE" program, a strategy to pressure countries to deal with sexual violence against children. Therefore, developing public policies to address sexual violence in early childhood is a priority[2].

Several studies regarding parental knowledge about sexual violence against children [3][4][5]. The results of the research show that parents' understanding of sexual violence is limited to rape. Moreover, parents do not know about other sexual violence such as touching, kissing and various other physical and psychological relationships. Limitations and confusion regarding the definition of sexual violence against children cause parents to understand sexual abuse in a non-comprehensive way. Therefore, children may experience mild and moderate types of sexual abuse without their parents knowing and realizing it.

On the other hand, parents do a lot of preventative work on their children to avoid sexual violence [6]. Several studies state that sexual education for children starting from home and parents can provide children with an understanding of how important it is to protect themselves to avoid sexual violence [7][8] [9].

Sexual education has become an increasingly urgent and important issue in the context of child development in Indonesia. This can be seen from the existence of Law No. 23 of 2002 concerning Child Protection, Article 13, one of the protections related to sexual violence. However, on the other hand, there is an increase in cases of sexual violence against children which is increasingly worrying, in 2020 there were 439 cases, in 2021 there were 858 and in 2022 there were 834. This shows that Indonesia has an emergency for sexual violence, especially against children.

This phenomenon indicates the need for appropriate and comprehensive sexual education from an early age, in order to provide appropriate protection and understanding to children in facing these risks. Parents, as central figures in children's lives, play an important role in providing adequate sexual education.

Cases of sexual violence and the importance of sexual education cannot be separated from the cultural taboo that is still attached to openness in discussing sexuality [10]. More and more parents are starting to realize the importance of providing sexual knowledge to their children. On the other hand, open conversations regarding sexual education, especially in the context of gender, are still faced with complex challenges due to existing cultural norms and traditions.

This study aims to explore the crucial role played by parents in conveying sexual education to children in Depok, Indonesia. This article will dive into the reconstruction and reconception of how sexual education is conveyed to children in a society that still faces various cultural and normative barriers. Through the use of Foucault's poststructuralist feminist theory, as well as a qualitative approach with a case study design, this article invites us to reflect on how parents in Indonesia are able to overcome these challenges.

Furthermore, this article will discuss how parents involve themselves in children's sexual education, how they deal with the discomforts and taboos that still linger in conversations about sexuality and gender, and how they reconstruct and reconceive their approach to this sensitive topic. Through a deeper understanding of the role of parents in sexual education in Indonesia, it is hoped that this article can make a significant contribution in inspiring positive changes in the development of children who are more in tune with the realities of a world that continues to develop.

2 Literature Review

Poststructuralist feminist theory has been discussed in relation to early childhood education. In general, poststructuralist feminist theory can provide information about the understanding of gender and how it is placed in education. The term poststructuralist feminist can mean a variety of different contexts. Feminism is a very tight competition for this term, such as post structuralist that it is not possible to produce a correct synthesis of terms that are foreign and tend to be taboo. Poststructuralist feminist theory is an approach that focuses on power relations and social construction of identity, including in the context of sexuality and gender. Foucault's concept of the "power of knowledge" highlights how knowledge about sexuality and gender shaped by strong social norms. In sexual education, parents have a role in constructing this knowledge and shaping their children's sexual identity.

A fundamental shift in Foucault's transformation analysis is that it makes the 'silent habits' of thinking visible and thus more difficult to sustain. This shift occurs through the insertion of a new way of thinking and way of life into the disciplines and professions being traversed and closely related to humans as subjects. Foucault argues that the subject becomes the center of a power relation that has occurred so far. In an era where children can easily be exposed to information from various sources, the role of parents in helping children understand sexuality and gender is becoming increasingly important. Foucault's theory shows that the construction of a child's sexual identity is influenced by the social norms they receive from the child's environment. Parents have a role to play in helping children understand, explore, and feel comfortable with their sexual identity.

3 Research Methods

This article adopts qualitative research. Specifically, this research method uses a case study approach. The case study was chosen because it allows the researcher to explore in great detail the respondents' perceptions and understanding of the discussion of gender. In addition, this case study method is to obtain clear and complete data. In this study, the researcher treated each subject differently for analysis.

The research location is in Depok, West Java, Indonesia. West Java is a province which is part of the Java archipelago but the people of West Java are not Javanese but are Sundanese, the second most ethnic group in Indonesia after the Javanese [11]. The city of Depok is a unique city which is located in West Java with a majority of ethnic Sundanese, but the city of Depok itself is predominantly Betawi, especially geographically closer to Jakarta than to Bandung as the capital city of West Java province.

The respondents are parents with two mothers, one father who has children aged 3-6 years with parents ranging in age from 25 years to 35 years including young parents who have access to technology and various ethnicities. The first respondent was from the Betawi tribe, the second respondent was from the Bima tribe and the third respondent was from Java-Betawi.

Methods of data collection by conducting interviews in Indonesian. Each interview lasted 1 to 2 hours and was conducted twice for each respondent. The data collection method by means of interviews is intended to find out more about the data obtained. Each respondent was interviewed

one by one in a different place and in order to avoid influence from one respondent to another.

After conducting interviews with all respondents, the researcher conducted interview transcripts to be used as data. The transcript is then checked by member checking by means of the interview transcript being given to the respondent to check if there is something that is not pleasing so that it is possible to delete existing data. The member check was carried out February 20-27, 2023. Furthermore, the researcher carried out data reliability using the reflexivity method as part of qualitative research [12] as well as part of the position of the researcher's subjectivity which can influence the research results. The researcher himself was a victim of sexual harassment when he was 10 years old at home by himself by a student (santri) whose parents lived close to the researcher's house and the researcher experienced sexual violence as an adult, when this incident the researcher almost committed suicide because he felt worthless and difficult to be accepted back into society. Therefore, researchers feel that sex education from an early age is very important to prevent children from becoming victims of sexual violence, which has a huge impact on the victim's lifetime.

Next, the researcher conducted data analysis techniques with several steps, namely: 1) writing interview transcripts on 3 parent respondents and 3 female teacher respondents; 2) the transcript results are returned to the respondents to read and review again, perhaps there is something objectionable; 3) then the researcher reflects on the meaning of the data as a whole; 4) coding all data; 5) Researchers obtained 515 codes from the interview transcripts, then these codes were combined according to themes; 6) the theme is adapted to the narrative form: and 7) translating the resulting codes and themes obtained. Researchers used grounded theory in analyzing data. The codes generated in each interview were then sub-themed, then the researcher identified and obtained two major themes.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Sexual education and social norms

The importance of sexual education is becoming increasingly clear in the face of a spike in cases of sexual violence against children. However, cultural and normative norms are still inherent in conveying accurate and comprehensive information to children, especially related to naming gender. The findings in this study indicate that respondents are aware of the importance of sexual education but have difficulty discussing gender because it is considered taboo, dirty and inappropriate. As in the following interview excerpt;

"The way to say it is difficult, I mean, we haven't been given such a rich education from the beginning, so we can teach it to our children, how is it like that, we still can't do it."

"Mhmhm... no, it's just that the most rude ones, then you can't say that."

"Yes, he was directed using words, so if you pee, for example, flick first. If it's gana, it's common to call their genitals sparrows. Yes, first flick the cheek, then gently flick it until it's clean, then douse it with water. If you poop (defecate), then if you can, use one of your fingers and then simulate using a hand simulation like this (left hand clenched into a fist, fingers on the right hand poking) a little prying so that it reaches the inside so there's no poop later. because he used to be itchy."

In practice, sex education is still difficult to talk about as an action agreed upon by parents and

children. Therefore, the fact that sex education mainly leads to the discussion of gender still seems complicated. Parents and society in general still find it difficult to change the paradigm of gender language to become something that is natural to say. The approach of building a gradual open dialogue between parents and children makes it difficult to talk about these issues. Avoiding the mention of gender or gender names either consciously or unconsciously and can be caused by many factors. These include taboos, lack of awareness; subject uncertainty; shame; inability to provide information about sexuality due to lack of confidence and lack of communication skills.

Parents use a cultural approach in the implementation of sexual education such as a culture of shame and an inherent taboo culture. On the one hand, a culture of shame and taboo is an important part of sexual education where children are directed not to be open in showing certain body parts. On the other hand, many cases of sexual violence go unresolved and there is no settlement because of shame and fear of getting worse. Children benefit from culturally open attitudes toward sexual issues, this helps form the basis for effective health and education strategies. Therefore, parents can actively participate in the learning process of sexual education in children.

Sex education carried out by parents is characterized by: an invisible form of emotional labor. This old man seemed to be invested a lot of time and agonized over what to say. Some parents in the UK are known to experience that providing sex education with extraordinary skill so that it is not noticed by their own children, because parents are confident in applying it as part of everyday life [13].

The natural role of the family as the front guard in sex education for children has great potential in suppressing the occurrence of sexual violence in children. Cultural diversity is another factor affecting access to sex education for children. The increase in population growth in Indonesia has provided impetus for increased efforts to address this issue in sexuality education.

5 Conclusions

Navigating the landscape of sexual education for young children in Indonesia involves reconciling cultural taboos with the pressing need for comprehensive knowledge. By employing Foucault's poststructuralist feminist theory, this study offers insights into parents' roles in facilitating these discussions. The qualitative case study approach captures the nuances of parents' strategies, providing a deeper understanding of how they reshape conversations while challenging societal norms. By shedding light on these complexities, the study contributes to the ongoing discourse on early childhood sexual education in Indonesia and highlights the transformative potential of parental involvement.

Foucault's poststructuralist feminist theory provides an in-depth view in analyzing the role of parents in children's sexual education in Indonesia. In the face of cultural and normative barriers, parents can utilize this conceptual framework to reconstruct and reconceptualize their approach to discussing sexuality and gender with their children. That way, they can provide the protection and knowledge needed to face complex challenges in an ever-changing world.

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