

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Parents perceptions about sex education for early adolescents in primary schools in Hegarmanah village area

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Sex education plays an important role as a preventive measure in preventing young teenagers from reproductive health and sexuality problems. The problem in Indonesia is related to sex education, namely that parents still feel reluctant to discuss sexual topics with early teens. **Objectives:** This study examines to identify parents' perceptions about sex education for early adolescents in elementary schools in the Hegarmanah Village area, Jatinangor District, Sumedang Regency. **Methods:** This study was a descriptive quantitative study with a survey approach via questionnaires to parents of students in grades 4-6 at elementary schools in Hegarmanah Village (n=371). The sample was taken using stratified random sampling with as many as 213 respondents. Data collection used a perception questionnaire of sex education for school-age children and data analysis used univariate analysis. **Results:** The research results showed that the majority of respondents had a negative perception of sex education in their early teens (51.2%), while the remainder had a positive perception of sex education in their early teens (48.8%). **Conclusions:** The majority of parents of students in grades 4-6 in elementary schools in the Hegarmanah Village area have a bad perception of sex education. Thus, a community-based education program is needed to increase parents' perceptions of sex education to be more positive.

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1. Introduction

The adolescent development phase consists of three stages, namely early adolescence (10-13 years), middle adolescence (14-17 years), and late adolescence (18-21 years) (Healthy Children, 2019). Adolescents who are at elementary school level, especially at grade 4-6, can generally be categorized in the early adolescents phase aged 10-12 years (Ragita & Fardana N., 2021). In 2022, the population of early adolescents in Indonesia will reach a significant figure, namely around 22.09 million people in the 10-13 years range and West Java stands out as the province that has the largest number of early adolescents in Indonesia, reaching around 18% of the total number of early adolescents in this country (Databoks, 2023). Early adolescence is a phase where an individual experiences changes towards puberty, with development occurring in various aspects, such as physical, emotional, cognitive, mental, and social aspects so that communication methods and different levels of understanding are needed in conveying information about sex and reproductive health compared to other age phases (Rahmania, 2023).

Providing sex education is a very important role to play as part of preventive efforts to protect young teenagers from various health problems related to their growth and development, especially in terms of reproductive health, such as marriage and pregnancy at a young age, infection sexual diseases, unwanted pregnancies at a young age, and frequent sexual violence in early adolescence (Widiawati & Selvi, 2022). The existence of reproductive health problems naturally arises from negative behavior carried out by early adolescents regarding sexuality (Syaputri & Solihati, 2021). In 2020, as many as 62.7% or around 39.52 million teenagers in Indonesia were involved in free sex, even before entering the early teenage phase (Harisandy & Winarti, 2020). Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency in 2020, it was also stated that

the prevalence of premarital sexual behavior in early adolescent girls was 16.4%, while in early adolescent boys it was 5.2% (BPS, 2020).

Risky behavior in dating relationships, such as kissing and stimulating each other, can be the beginning of premarital sexual relations carried out by early adolescents (Ibnu et al., 2020). Bad behavior in early teens can be caused by a lack of knowledge they have regarding reproductive and sexual health (Adyani et al., 2023). The rapid flow of globalization can also increase the risk of inappropriate sexual behavior in early teens because vulgar information can spread quickly throughout the world so it is necessary to filter information carefully (Hasibi et al., 2020). Moreover, the tendency of early adolescents to rely on peer relationships can be a negative influence if it is not accompanied by adequate knowledge, especially regarding sexuality. Therefore, the role of parents is very crucial in providing understanding about sex education to children in their early teens because parents should be the first source for their children in obtaining knowledge or information, especially related to sex education (Mahfuzh et al., 2024). However, the problem in Indonesia related to sex education is that most parents still feel reluctant to discuss sexual topics with their early teens so the need for sex education in early teens is often ignored (Rusdianasari, 2022). Most parents believe that sex education only includes conveying information about reproductive organs and various positions in sexual activity (Shin et al., 2019). The lack of clarity regarding the meaning of sex education gives parents and society the perception that providing sex education to children and teenagers is considered too vulgar (Wibowo, 2020).

Research conducted by Nadeem et al (2021) on 273 parents in Pakistan found that around 46% or around 126 parents never talked to their children about sex education or sexual issues because they felt awkward and believe that sex education was contrary to Islamic ideology and is considered a taboo topic to discuss with children (Nadeem et al., 2021). The view of parents who still consider sex education as information about reproduction and sexual activity is one of the factors that makes them consider sex education a taboo topic and does not need to be conveyed to children before they reach puberty (Gustari, 2022). Perception allows individuals to interpret and group an object which is then followed up into attitudes and behavior. Parents perceptions about sex education are important to research because they can influence parents attitudes and actions in taking steps related to sex education (Adyani et al., 2021). If parents' negative perceptions are not addressed, this can influence parents' attitudes in providing sex education so that it will have an impact on the lives of early adolescents and increase the risk of deviant sexual behavior in early adolescents in the future.

In the West Java region, there has been no research examining parents' perceptions about sex education in early teens. Research outside West Java also focuses mostly on the perceptions of parents with school-age children in general, not specifically on parents with children in their early teens. Meanwhile, previous research by Syoufiana et al (2022) at the Denpasar State Special School which involved 144 parents with children aged 11-14 years, further highlighted parents' perceptions of sex education in early adolescents with autism. The research findings noted that 56.8% of parents had a negative perception, while 43.2% of parents had a positive perception of sex education (Syoufiana et al., 2022).

West Java faces serious challenges related to cases of rape and early marriage in early teens. In 2021, the number of cases of sexual abuse or rape in early teens reached 96 cases in West Java, making it the province with the second highest number of sexual abuse cases after East Java which recorded 99 cases (Databoks, 2021). In addition, among the three main provinces in Indonesia, West Java has a rate of early marriage among early teens of 24/1000 cases, making it the province with the highest rate of early marriage among young teens after East Java which reached 31/1000 cases (Solopos, 2023). This prevalence data shows that West Java is facing serious problems related to sexual aspects in early adolescence, so it is necessary to carry out similar research focused on the West Java region.

Sumedang Regency, as one of the regions in West Java, is experiencing a significant level of concern regarding cases of premarital sex and pregnancy among teenagers, namely 1,032 cases were found with 68 cases occurring in Jatinangor District and 65% of the pregnancies were caused by pregnancies outside of marriage (Natalia et al., 2023). Jatinangor is a sub-district located in Sumedang Regency and includes 12 villages, including Hegarmanah Village. The Head of the

Welfare and Health Section of Hegarmanah Village in a preliminary study interview said that in May 2023, several young teenagers in the village experienced sexual harassment and rape by individuals around them. From this incident, it can be seen that a non-conducive environment can cause problems related to sexuality in early adolescents. This finding is supported by a study by Elyarianti & Azis (2021) which states that teenagers who are in a less conducive social environment have a 3.329 times greater chance of being involved in sexual misconduct (Elyarianti & Azis, 2021).

Prevention of problems and sexual deviant behavior in Hegarmanah Village should begin with parents' efforts to provide sex education to their children. This is in line with Gustari (2022) research findings which show that parental involvement in providing sex education can be an effective strategy for preventing negative behavior in early adolescents regarding sexual aspects and this is of course also influenced by their perception of sex education itself (Gustari, 2022). Based on a preliminary study, three out of four parents in Hegarmanah Village view sex education as a topic that is considered taboo and they believe that providing sex education to young teenagers is not necessary. Even, if necessary, they think this task should be the teacher's responsibility to provide education in the school environment.

Based on these problems and phenomena, it is important to conduct research on "Description of Parents Perceptions about Sex Education in Early Adolescents in Elementary Schools in the Hegarmanah Village Area, Jatinangor District", considering that there is still a lack of research regarding parental perceptions about sex education in early adolescents. Most previous research only focused on parents' perceptions of sex education in general for school-aged children. There has been no specific research regarding the perceptions of parents of elementary school students in early adolescence in Indonesia, especially in West Java. Therefore, this research aims to identify parents' perceptions about sex education for early adolescents in elementary schools in the Hegarmanah Village area, Jatinangor District, Sumedang Regency, with the hope that the results can be used as a preventive measure in overcoming reproductive health and sexuality problems in early adolescents.

2. Methods

This research uses a quantitative descriptive research design with a survey approach using a questionnaire. The variable in this research uses a single variable, namely parents' perceptions about sex education in early adolescents. The population of this study were parents of students in grades 4-6 at elementary schools in Hegarmanah Village, namely SDN Hegarmanah I (n=163), SDN Cikuda (n=120), and SDN Neglasari (n=88), a total of 371 people. The sampling technique was stratified random sampling so that the total sample was 213 respondents spread across 3 elementary schools, with details at SDN Hegarmanah I as many as 94 respondents, SDN Cikuda as many as 69 respondents, and SDN Neglasari as many as 50 respondents. Data collection was carried out using a perception questionnaire instrument regarding sex education for school-aged children developed by Joyo & Zubaidah (2016), consisting of demographic data and statements about perceptions totaling 25 statement items with Likert scale assessment criteria. The instrument has gone through validity and reliability tests with the results of the calculated r value > r table (0.349) and Cronbach Alpha 0.929. Data analysis uses univariate analysis, namely frequency and percentage distribution for perception variables which are described in the categories of positive perception and negative perception.

3. Results and Discussion

The demographic characteristics of the respondents found that almost all respondents were female, namely 196 people (92%) and most of the respondents were aged 26-35 years, namely 78 people (36.6%). Based on demographic data of respondents, the majority of respondents final education was at high school level, namely 87 people (40.8%), and all respondents were Muslim (100%). In the experience data in obtaining education or information about sex, the results showed that the majority of respondents had received education or information about sex, namely 142 people (66.7%), while in the data on the desire to know about

sex education, the results showed that almost all respondents wanted to know about sex education, namely 181 people (85%) (Table 1).

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n=213)

Demographic Data	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	17	8.0
Female	196	92.0
Age		
17-25 years	10	4.7
26-35 years	78	36.6
36-45 years	73	34.3
46-55 years	52	24.4
Educational History		
Not attending school	1	0.5
Elementary school	39	18.3
Junior high school	55	25.8
Senior high school	87	40.8
College	31	14.6
Religion		
Islam	213	100.0
Experience obtaining education for information about sex		
Ever	142	66.7
Never	71	33.3
Desire to know about sex education		
Yes	181	85.0
No	32	15.0

Parents perceptions about sex education for early adolescents in this study found that the majority of respondents had negative perceptions, namely 109 people (51.2%) (Table 2). This shows that the majority of parents of elementary school students in the Hegarmanah Village area, Jatinangor District, Sumedang Regency have a bad or negative perception of sex education in early adolescents.

Table 2 Parents Perceptions of Sex Education in Earlt Adolescents (n=213)

Variable	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Perception		
Positive	104	48.8%
Negative	109	51.2%
Total	213	100

The results of cross tabulation analysis between demographic characteristics and parental perceptions about sex education in early teens found that there were 31 respondents who had negative perceptions of sex education in early adolescents aged aged 46-55 years (59.6%). Based on the characteristics of the latest educational history, there was 1 respondent with a history of not attending school who had a negative perception of sex education in early adolescents. The majority of respondents with a history of elementary school education, namely 24 respondents, had a negative perception of sex education in their early adolescents (61.5%) and the majority of respondents with a history of junior high school education, namely 33 respondents, also had a negative perception of sex education in their early adolescents (60%). Based on experience data in obtaining education or information about sex, the majority of respondents who had never received education or information about sex, namely 46 respondents, had a negative perception of sex education in early adolescents (64.8%). In addition, based on data on the desire to know

about sex education, there were 26 respondents who did not want to know about sex education who had a negative perception of sex education in early adolescents (81.2%) (Table 3).

Table 3 Demographic Characteristics and Parents Perceptions of Sex Education in Early Adolescents (n=213)

Demographic Characteristics	Perception				Total	
	Positive		Negative		f	%
	f	%	f	%		
Gender						
Male	3	17.6	14	82.4	17	8.0
Female	101	51.5	95	48.5	196	92.0
Age						
17-25 years	5	50.0	5	50.0	10	4.7
26-35 years	44	56.4	34	43.6	78	36.6
36-45 years	34	46.6	39	53.4	73	34.3
46-55 years	21	40.4	31	59.6	52	24.4
Educational History						
Not attending school	0	0	1	100	1	0.5
Elementary school	15	38.5	24	61.5	39	18.3
Junior high school	22	40.0	33	60.0	55	25.8
Senior high school	45	51.7	42	48.3	87	40.8
College	22	71.0	9	29.0	31	14.6
Religion						
Islam	104	48.8	109	51.2	213	100.0
Experience obtaining education for information about sex						
Ever	79	55.6	63	44.4	142	66.7
Never	25	35.2	46	64.8	71	33.3
Desire to know about sex education						
Yes	98	54.1	83	45.9	181	85.0
No	6	18.8	26	81.2	32	15.0

Sex education is very important to convey to every young teenager at the start of puberty so that they have adequate knowledge about body changes and other aspects related to reproductive health (Fitriah et al., 2021). Sex education can be held in various places, including families, schools, communities, social institutions, health institutions and religious institutions. However, sex education will be much more effective if it is given from an early age in the family environment, especially by parents because they have emotional closeness and better knowledge about the child's psychological condition and development (Purwasih et al., 2023). In providing sex education, good perception is needed from parents so that they can take appropriate and effective steps related to sex education (Adyani et al., 2021). The results of this research show that the majority of parents of students in elementary schools in Hegarmanah Village, Jatinangor District, Sumedang Regency have a negative perception of sex education in early adolescents. This finding is in line with the research results of Syoufiana et al (2022), where 25 out of 44 parents (56.8%) who have children aged 11-14 years at the Denpasar State SLB have a negative perception of sex education, namely the majority of them consider sex education as a topic which is taboo to give to children in their early teens (Syoufiana et al., 2022). Research by Amir et al (2022) also states that parents still have negative perceptions of sex education because they assume that children will get sex education at school so that the role of parents is considered less important in providing sex education (Amir et al., 2022).

A person's perception does not arise spontaneously. According to Syoufiana et al (2022), a person's age influences the level of thinking maturity and adaptability related to the individual's perception. Parents in middle adulthood tend to see sex education as a more taboo topic compared to parents in early adulthood (Syoufiana et al., 2022). In this study, it was found that 31 parents

aged 46-55 years (59.6%) or those in the middle or middle adult age group had a negative perception of sex education in early adolescents. These findings indicate that parents in the middle adult category generally have a poor perception of sex education.

Azro'i & Simamora (2022) stated that several factors influence parents' perceptions of sex education in early adolescents, including one of them is the level of parental education (Azro'i & Simamora, 2022). In this study, it was found that 1 parent who did not attend school had a negative perception of sex education in early adolescents. Most parents with a history of elementary school education also tend to have a negative perception of sex education in early adolescents. Apart from that, the majority of parents with a junior high school education background also have a negative perception of sex education in early adolescents. This finding is in line with research by Erfiany et al (2021) which shows that the majority of parents with low education have poor perceptions and knowledge about sex education (Erfiany et al., 2021).

Education is a learning process that aims to develop or improve special skills (Pristiwanti et al., 2022). A person's education can influence the extent to which they are able to receive information and it is expected that individuals with a high level of education also have broader knowledge (Erfiany et al., 2021). High education can influence the way a person responds to a situation more rationally compared to individuals who have a low level of education or no education (Ulfa et al., 2021). Parents with a high level of education generally have better knowledge and awareness about the importance of sex education so that it can influence their behavior in providing sex education to early adolescents (Parwati et al., 2021).

Azro'i & Simamora (2022) stated that individual experiences and interests or desires can also be internal factors that influence a person's perception (Azro'i & Simamora, 2022). In this research, the results showed that the majority of parents who had never received education or information about sex had a negative perception of sex education in early adolescents. This finding is in line with research by Ardiyah et al (2022) in Batin XXIV District, Batanghari Regency, which shows that parents perceptions of sex education for children are influenced by parents past experiences (Ardiyah et al., 2022). The diverse sexual backgrounds and experiences of each parent can influence their perception on sex education so that parents experiences become a factor that influences their perceptions (Adyani et al., 2021).

Apart from past experiences, individual interests or desires are also a factor that can influence perception (Azro'i & Simamora, 2022). In this research, the results showed that the majority of parents who did not want to know about sex education had a negative perception of sex education in early adolescents. This finding is in line with research by Hurst et al (2022) which shows that the level of openness and interest of parents in discussing sexuality can influence parents' perceptions of the importance of sex education in early adolescents. Parents who are more open to this topic tend to be more supportive of sex education for their children. On the other hand, parents who are more conservative or feel taboo about talking about sex may have a different or negative view of sex education (Hurst et al., 2022).

Perception involves the relationship between cognitive and affective components. The cognitive component of perception involves intellectual processing of information, understanding, reasoning and interpretation which includes how parents understand and recognize the stimuli they encounter related to sex education (Jiang et al., 2021). Then, the affective component of perception involves parents' emotional responses or feelings towards the stimuli they experience, including positive or negative evaluations, feelings of joy or displeasure, or other emotional reactions to sex education (Gervasi et al., 2023). These two components of perception are interrelated in forming a complete and complex perception about sex education.

The importance of sex education in early adolescents involves complex issues and is often related to diverse values and beliefs. Therefore, a comprehensive and family-focused approach in conveying information about sex education can help in understanding parents needs and expectations. It is important to remember that parental views and perceptions can vary widely. In general, parents' perceptions about sex education for early adolescents in elementary schools in Hegarmanah Village, Jatinangor District, Sumedang Regency can be categorized as "negative" perceptions. Thus, positive strategies are needed to change parents' negative perceptions about

sex education in early adolescents into more positive perceptions by increasing their understanding through more effective educational approaches.

4. Conclusion

The perception of parents of elementary school students in the Hegarmanah Village area, Jatinangor District, Sumedang Regency, the majority still have a bad or negative perception of sex education in early adolescents. Practically, suggestions for the field of nursing science are to collaborate with educational institutions, especially schools, in facilitating parents to increase their competence in teaching sex education to their children by planning workshops or seminars as one way of increasing parents' perceptions of sex education more positive so that it can prevent and minimize the occurrence of problems related to reproductive health and sexuality in early adolescents. Future research can broaden the scope by paying attention to a more balanced comparison between samples of fathers and mothers so that the results are more likely to be generalized and can be used to see comparisons between fathers and mother's perceptions about sex education. Apart from that, further research can also consider exploring further the relationship between parents' perceptions and their role or awareness in providing sex education to early adolescents, which can be researched using a descriptive correlational research design.

5. Ethics approval and consent to participate

This research has received approval from the Padjadjaran University Research Ethics Commission with number 132/UN6.KEP/EC/2024. Researchers have explained the research objectives, benefits, and disadvantages during the research process. All respondents understood and were willing to become respondents by signing the informed consent sheet.

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