

Parent-child sexual communication among parents of school-aged children: A qualitative study

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Abstract. Sexuality is often regarded as a taboo subject and considered inappropriate for parents to discuss with their children. Consequently, there is a critical need for effective sexual communication between parents and elementary school-aged children. This study aims to explore in-depth the nature of sexual communication practiced by parents with their elementary-aged children. Data were collected through focus group discussions (FGDs), observations, and documentation involving members of the PKK group in Village P and the Aisyiyah group in Village S, District D, Malang Regency, who have children aged 6/7 to 11/12 years. A content analysis approach was employed to examine and interpret the sexual communication delivered by parents. The findings indicate that parents perceive sexual communication as the delivery of information related to sexuality. Factors influencing this communication include adequate knowledge, social norms, cultural values, religious beliefs, and the ability to communicate effectively with children. Parental sexual communication with elementary school-aged children presents unique barriers and challenges. Therefore, it is essential to increase the dissemination of accurate sexuality-related information to parents in order to improve their communication skills. Enhanced parental communication skills can promote confidence in discussing sexuality with their children and contribute to the prevention of child sexual abuse.

1 Introduction

The primary figures responsible for safeguarding elementary school-aged children from undesirable experiences are their parents. Nevertheless, environmental factors also exert considerable influence on children at this developmental stage, ranging from the immediate surroundings to prevailing societal norms and mass media exposure. Prior to receiving formal education at school, children acquire their earliest learning experiences at home, predominantly guided by their parents. Within the family context, parents are responsible for instilling personal values, cultural norms, moral foundations, and understandings of sexuality. Among these essential areas, sexuality remains a topic frequently avoided in parental education. Sexuality encompasses all matters related to gender [1]. From a psychoanalytic perspective, sexuality extends beyond sexual behavior, reflecting how

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individuals conduct themselves in fulfilling their roles within society as unique human beings.

Sexuality is still frequently perceived as an inappropriate topic to be discussed with children, despite its relevance to the development of individual identity [1]. Justicia [5] asserts that many parents continue to consider sexuality as a subject that is too mature to be introduced to elementary school-aged children. When sexuality remains a taboo subject, yet accessible through various sources such as parents, peers, schools, and healthcare professionals [10], children are at risk of receiving fragmented or inaccurate information. Due to the perception held by many parents that sexuality is not yet appropriate for discussion with children at this age, children may grow up with limited understanding of their sensitive body parts, physical boundaries, and strategies for responding to uncomfortable situations. A lack of sexuality knowledge can increase a child's vulnerability to becoming a victim. This is consistent with the findings of Magta and Dewi [7], who note that children constitute a vulnerable group and are often at risk of experiencing violence. Therefore, the active involvement of parents is essential, as sexual communication is ideally initiated within the home environment.

Thus, knowledge about sexuality is crucial as it supports the development of children's conceptual understanding of sexuality itself [1]. According to Sayekti and Sayekti [12], the provision of sexuality related information from parents can help elementary school-aged children to form a healthy and normative understanding of the body, sensitive areas, and appropriate behavioral values. Given the importance of parental involvement in imparting sexuality knowledge, a specialized approach to communication is necessary. This is because the way elementary-aged children are treated and educated differs significantly from adolescents. Therefore, sexuality education requires deliberate communication—specifically, sexual communication. The form of sexual communication parents should adopt is open communication. The use of accessible language facilitates children's comprehension of the information conveyed, ensuring that the intended message is effectively understood.

Therefore, such communication must be reinforced—not merely as a channel of information, but as a proactive and preventive strategy to protect children from sexual abuse. This initiative should not be viewed solely as a means to reduce existing rates of child sexual abuse but, more importantly, as a preventative effort to ensure that fewer children become victims of such crimes in the future [13].

Sexual communication serves as a bridge between parents and children to convey values, beliefs, expectations, and sexual knowledge [4]. According to Flores and Barroso [2], sexual communication is a reciprocal or two-way interaction between parents and children that discusses topics related to sex, sexuality, and sexual health implications. Given its inherently bidirectional nature, healthy sexual communication requires active contribution and mutual engagement from both parents and children. The goal of such communication is to ensure that children understand their own sensitive body areas—which are not to be touched by others—the sexual changes they will experience, and the behaviors they should avoid in accordance with prevailing social norms.

Puspitasari et al. [9] identify four key aspects of sexual communication, as follows: Information, information refers to the transfer of knowledge and understanding that parents have acquired and subsequently share with their children during conversations, particularly regarding topics previously learned or experienced. Values, values involve the transmission of moral and cultural standards upheld by the family, aimed at preserving family dignity and collective well-being. Expectations, expectations refer to the parents' positive aspirations concerning sexuality, particularly the desire that their children abstain from engaging in sexual behavior prior to marriage. Sexual Content/Themes, sexual content or themes pertain to discussions of various sexuality-related topics, which are explicitly addressed within the scope of parent-child sexual communication.

The primary objective of sexual communication between parents and elementary school-aged children is to protect children from sexual violence, a growing and alarming concern in today's society. Furthermore, effective sexual communication between parents and children facilitates the child's understanding of their own body, personal boundaries, and the principles of healthy relationships [3].

The average age range of elementary school-aged children is approximately 6/7 to 11/12 years. This period represents a critical stage in child development, marked by rapid changes in physical, cognitive, emotional, and social domains, which are significantly influenced by individuals within the child's immediate environment [14]. Zakiyah et al. [14] assert that the elementary school years constitute a pivotal developmental phase, as they encompass the transition from early to late childhood and the onset of prepubescence. During this period, children begin to recognize and engage with others—such as peers, teachers, and significant adults—whom they consider important figures. As such, elementary school-aged children are surrounded by close and influential individuals.

Children at this stage tend to observe and imitate the behaviors of those around them. This aligns with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes that behavior, environment, and cognition are key determinants of individual development [11]. When children observe and model positive behaviors, the resulting outcomes are generally favorable; conversely, the imitation of negative behaviors may lead to undesirable consequences. In the context of sexual communication, when elementary school-aged children observe healthy and appropriate sexual communication modeled by those in their immediate environment, it can serve as a protective factor against the threat of child sexual abuse.

2 Methods

2.1 Participant

This study was conducted within the PKK Group of Village P and the Aisiyiyah Group of Village S, both located in Subdistrict D, Malang Regency. The selection of these locations was based on their classification as areas with a high prevalence of child marriage—an issue that falls under the broader category of child sexual abuse. The participants in this study were parents of primary school-aged children.

In Village P, a total of ten (10) participants were involved, while six (6) participants were recruited from Village S. The selected participants represented diverse demographic backgrounds in terms of age, educational attainment, and occupational status. Demographic identifiers were labeled as follows:

S = Participants from Village P

K = Participants from Village

2.2 Research Instrument

The data collection method in this study utilized primary data obtained directly from participants. Data were collected through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The use of FGDs was chosen because it allows for the emergence of broader perspectives on the research issue, as participants came from diverse backgrounds. Such a range of viewpoints would be difficult to obtain through individual interviews.

The observational data in this study were documented using anecdotal records. Furthermore, audio and visual recordings were employed as part of the documentation process during FGDs. Audio recordings were used to capture verbal data that may not have

been noted in real-time by the researcher, while visual recordings served as supporting evidence of participant engagement and attendance during the discussion sessions.

2.3 Data Analysis Techniques

This study employed a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach to explore in depth the nature of sexual communication conducted by parents with their primary school-aged children. The descriptive approach was chosen to provide a detailed understanding of how parents convey information related to sexuality and the contextual factors influencing such communication.

3 Result

Based on the research conducted, the following findings were obtained:

Information

When parents are able to provide information and knowledge to their children about sexuality—derived from their own experiences or acquired understanding—this becomes the foundation of sexual communication. Several participant responses illustrate this point:

“It’s about clothing, menstruation, and dating.” (S2)

“It’s like those ‘girls-only’ sessions at school. But not all schools have them. Usually, they do in madrasahs.” (S3)

“In my opinion, it’s a deeper communication process related to the child’s self-awareness and strengthening of identity—it’s a long process.” (K2)

“It’s about which body areas can and cannot be touched.” (K5)

These statements emerged in response to the question: “What do you understand by sexual communication?”

The first identified aspect is information. According to Puspitasari et al. [9], this involves the transmission of sexual knowledge and experiences that parents have previously acquired and then shared with their children. The sexual communication practiced by parents of elementary school-aged children primarily revolves around basic understandings of sexuality. Such understanding is perceived by parents as the act of delivering information that enables children to recognize their bodily boundaries and reinforces their sense of self-identity. This aligns with the findings of Sayekti and Sayekti [12], who emphasized that parents interpret sexual communication as instruction related to reproductive health. However, The way parents conceptualize sexual communication is deeply influenced by their personal beliefs and cultural backgrounds.

When asked about the appropriate time to initiate sexual communication with their children, participants provided the following responses:

“As early as possible.” (S3)

“For me, it started when my daughter had her first menstruation.” (S2)

“When my child asked—she once asked me, ‘Where do babies come from, Mom?’” (S1)

“I think my child will just figure it out on their own eventually.” (S9)

“Since early childhood.” (Combined Key Informant Group)

The findings revealed that parents hold personal preferences regarding the appropriate timing for initiating sexual communication, and these choices are not without justification. The primary aim is to equip children with the ability to protect themselves from the risks posed by today’s increasingly concerning social environment and to support the development of a strong sense of identity. These differences in timing are influenced by parents’ perceptions of sexual communication and the cultural values they uphold. Nevertheless, the

majority of parents agreed that sexual communication should ideally begin during early childhood.

When asked why sexual communication was initiated, participants responded:

“To help them protect themselves.” (S4)

“So they don’t fall into bad influences.” (S5)

“To strengthen the child’s identity and keep them from things like LGBT, etc.” (K3)

“It takes intention—it adds knowledge, after all.” (Combined Key Informant Group)

“Sexual communication is important.” (K1)

When participants were asked about the supporting factors that encourage sexual communication, their responses included:

“Well, the support comes from being worried about their social interactions.” (S8)

“It’s a form of love, really.” (K1)

Meanwhile, regarding the inhibiting factors, participants responded:

“Honestly, I’m confused about how to talk about it.” (S1)

“I don’t know the information—I don’t know how to explain it.” (S3)

“I do have the intention, but I lack the information, so I’m not sure.” (S10)

“The information is lacking.” (S10)

“It’s just... I don’t know what to call it.” (S1)

“I’m not confident yet—I still feel like I don’t know enough.” (K4)

“I’m afraid that doing it might affect my closeness with the child.” (K1)

Parents are primarily driven to engage in sexual communication by concerns over their children's current social environments. Additionally, many see this communication as an expression of affection and care for their children. However, during the implementation of such communication, parents face significant obstacles, particularly the lack of accessible information and the fear of damaging the emotional closeness between parent and child. Furthermore, parents differ in how they perceive and approach sexual communication, and these differences are largely influenced by the extent of their own knowledge on the topic. While mothers tend to take a more dominant role in this area, it is important to encourage shared responsibility between both parents to avoid role imbalance within the family. By fostering equitable parental involvement, children are more likely to develop trust in both parents, rather than relying solely on one.

When researchers asked whether specific skills were necessary for delivering sexual communication, participants responded:

“Yes, it’s necessary—so we know how to talk about it.” (S3)

“Yes, it’s important—we can use books so it doesn’t feel vague or abstract, and we can tell stories.” (K3)

Regarding what kinds of skills are needed, participants elaborated:

“Being able to talk and knowing the information.” (S3)

“Yes, using books is helpful so the conversation is not vague—using stories.” (K3)

Parents acknowledged the need for specific communication skills to effectively convey sexual information to their children. These skills include verbal communication abilities and the use of educational media to make the interaction more engaging and less monotonous, which helps prevent children from becoming bored. At the elementary school level, children are in the concrete operational stage, where they require tangible objects to understand and learn effectively. According to Zebua and Harumi [15], various forms of educational media can support parental sexual communication with children, including comics, books, puzzles, videos, visual aids, and guidance boards. These media alternatives serve as valuable tools in facilitating meaningful and age-appropriate sexual communication between parents and elementary school-aged children.

Values

Values refer to parents' ability to communicate and internalize their own beliefs in accordance with prevailing social norms. When participants were asked who should be responsible for delivering sexual communication, their responses included:

"Parents, of course." (S3)

"School." (S10)

"Parents." (All Key Informants)

"School, maybe also religious learning centers." (All Key Informants)

When asked whether there were individuals or institutions that opposed the implementation of sexual communication, participants responded:

"No, I don't think so." (S10)

"I agree." (All Key Informants)

"I think most people agree nowadays, but maybe in the past it was considered taboo." (K4)

"I once tried to talk about it, but someone disagreed, so I just went along with them. So, yes, there are still people who don't agree." (K5)

When asked who supports the implementation of sexual communication, participants said:

"My partner." (S2)

"My husband." (All Key Informants)

The second aspect is values. According to Puspitasari et al. [9], values refer to the transmission and internalization of values or norms that have been established in the child's social environment. These values are shaped by parents' beliefs grounded in prevailing cultural and societal norms, which are reflected in their role as the primary agents responsible for conveying sexual communication to their children. In addition, many parents also believe that formal education (e.g., schools) and non-formal education (e.g., religious learning centers) contribute significantly to this process. Generally, sexual communication is supported by educational institutions, and no institution has officially rejected its implementation. However, some individuals still consider discussions of sexuality to be taboo. Another important supporter of sexual communication identified by participants is their spouse. Mutual agreement between mothers and fathers helps foster cooperation, which is essential for establishing ideal and consistent sexual communication within the family.

When the researcher asked whether religion influences sexual communication, participants responded:

"Yes, I told [my child] that the baby came from Allah." (S1)

"Yes, religion plays a role—it helps [children] understand as well." (S1)

Religion plays a distinct role in shaping sexual communication by offering children a moral and spiritual perspective on sexuality. In addition to intention, the presence of a supportive environment significantly enhances parents' capacity to engage in sexual communication with their children. Conversely, a lack of environmental awareness or access to information can hinder the effectiveness of such communication efforts.

When participants were asked about their confidence in delivering sexual communication, several responses reflected varying levels of certainty. One participant stated,

"I lack sufficient information." (S10)

Another expressed doubt by saying,

"I am unsure." (S4)

Conversely, some participants demonstrated full confidence,

“For me, I am 100% confident, because it is a long-term process that develops over time, for example, during bedtime conversations.” (K1)

Meanwhile, others admitted a lack of readiness,

“I am not confident yet; I still lack adequate knowledge.” (K4)

Regarding the question of who plays a more significant role in conducting sexual communication, participants responded:

“Mother.” (S2)

“Both father and mother.” (All Key Informants)

“Mostly the parents.” (K4)

“In my case, we divide the responsibility between my husband and me.” (K2)

When asked about factors that facilitate effective sexual communication, participants cited emotional proximity and available time as enablers. Their responses included:

“Because there is emotional closeness.” (K6)

“Because we spend more time together.” (K1)

“To build confidence, we must first establish communication. Only then can we deliver sexual education effectively.” (K6)

“In my view, the process involves deeper communication related to the child’s self-discovery and identity development. It is a long process that undoubtedly requires strong bonding between parents and children.” (K2).

The effectiveness of sexual communication between parents and children is significantly influenced by the presence of emotional closeness and the availability of time between both parties. When emotional closeness has been established, children tend to feel more at ease and receptive to the sexual communication initiated by their parents. However, one of the main barriers faced by parents is the limited availability of information and knowledge regarding how to conduct sexual communication effectively. This inadequacy often leads to suboptimal outcomes in the implementation of such communication.

When participants were asked about factors that hinder the execution of sexual communication, they responded:

“It’s the same, I don’t have enough information and I don’t know the boundaries.” (S5)

“Yes, I’m actually confused about how to talk about it.” (S1)

“I don’t know the information, and I’m confused about how to explain it.” (S3)

“I do have the intention, but I lack the necessary information, so I don’t know how.” (S10)

“The information is insufficient.” (S10)

“Yes, what do you call it...?” (S1)

“It’s about knowledge of sexual education, how to deliver it and find the time.” (K4)

In addition, when asked about how they felt before or during the process of engaging in sexual communication, participants shared:

“I felt uneasy.” (S6)

“Yes, I felt anxious.” (S3)

“It felt awkward.” (K4)

“I was afraid of saying the wrong thing.” (K5)

Parents also experience emotional challenges during the implementation of sexual communication, such as feelings of anxiety, worry, awkwardness, and fear of making mistakes. Nevertheless, parents unanimously agree that sexual communication is essential, as it helps children to recognize and understand their sexuality as well as the sensitive parts of their bodies. Consequently, children are better equipped to protect and safeguard themselves from negative external influences. It is therefore advisable that the delivery of sexual communication be tailored using language that is age-appropriate and easily understood by children.

Exptation

When parents are able to internalize positive expectations regarding their children's future experiences with sexuality, it becomes a foundational aspect of healthy sexual communication. In response to the question of whether intention is necessary in conducting sexual communication, participants responded,

"Yes, I have the intention, but the information is lacking, so I don't know what to do" (S10)

"Intention is absolutely necessary because it can help us gain more knowledge" (K – general response).

When asked whether there were parents who did not have the intention to engage in sexual communication, one participant responded, "No, I don't think there are any" (S1).

The researcher also asked about the parents' expectations for their children, to which participants answered:

"So they will know if there's any sexual abuse" (S3)

"To strengthen their identity and avoid things like LGBT, etc." (K3).

In regard to whether the environment influences parents in carrying out sexual communication, a participant stated,

"Yes, it has an influence" (S5).

When asked what type of environment hinders sexual communication, a participant responded,

"It influences when you don't have access to information" (S8).

The third aspect is expectation. Expectations refer to the internalization of positive aspirations regarding the child's future experiences related to sexuality [9]. These expectations are manifested through the intention to engage in sexual communication with children. It is imperative that all parents undertake this responsibility with deliberate intent. Sexual communication is conducted because parents hope that their children will become aware, conscious, and protected from sexual abuse and promiscuous behaviors. Therefore, it is crucial for children to develop a strong sense of identity, which helps them resist the pressures of contemporary social influences.

Sexual Topics and Themes

This aspect refers to parents' ability to communicate specific topics related to sexuality with their children. When asked about the aspects that should be conveyed during sexual communication, participants provided the following responses:

"Topics such as menstruation, following the available school materials" (S2), and

"In my opinion, it's more about deeper communication that helps the child develop self-awareness and strengthen their personal identity, which is a long-term process" (K2).

The researcher also explored which themes should be addressed with children. Participants responded:

"I'm not sure what it's called exactly" (S1),

"Things like how to dress, menstruation, dating" (S2),

"Like girls-only classes at school, though not all schools have them—madrasa schools usually do" (S3),

"To strengthen the child's identity and prevent them from getting involved with LGBT issues and the like" (K3),

"Areas of the body that are allowed and not allowed to be touched by others" (K5).

The fourth aspect is sexual materials or themes. Sexual materials or themes refer to topics related to sexuality that are conveyed to children [9]. These topics reflect the nature of parent–child sexual communication. Participants noted that such communication involves providing children with an understanding of self-awareness, particularly through discussions on puberty. In addition, parents reported introducing children to the concept of bodily autonomy, particularly which body parts are considered private and should not be touched by others. Furthermore, children are expected to develop a strong sense of self-identity to help them understand their gender characteristics and differentiate themselves from the opposite sex.

In the anecdotal records, the researcher found that based on the response sheets, which included the open-ended question, “In my opinion, conducting sexual communication with children is...”, the majority of participants responded with statements such as “very important and necessary.” Other responses included:

“Sexual communication with children is very important to educate them about sexuality and to prevent unwanted sexual accidents.”

“It is important and must be delivered to children so they understand and are able to protect their reproductive organs.”

“Very important, so that children have a deeper understanding of what parts of their bodies can or cannot be touched by others.”

“Mandatory, it must be continuously conveyed to children in accordance with their age and capacity.”

“Very important, as children can learn about sexual education from an early age, enabling them to act appropriately in the future and protect themselves.”

“Very important, especially as it will be useful when children reach adolescence.”

“It must be delivered in a language that is easy for children to understand.”

In the PKK (Family Welfare Movement) group discussion, participants showed high engagement at the beginning of the session. However, by the middle to the end of the discussion, several participants began using their mobile phones and conversing with nearby peers. Participants who were seated closer to the researcher tended to be more responsive, while those seated farther away often followed the majority opinion without contributing their own perspectives. When asked about their feelings when engaging in or preparing for sexual communication with their children, some participants responded with shy smiles and light laughter, indicating embarrassment. They also occasionally shared personal experiences related to the topic. In contrast, participants from the Aisyiyah group showed greater curiosity and engagement, actively participating and demonstrating keen interest in the subject matter. When responding to questions, they also included their own prior experiences with sexual communication. The group discussion proceeded in a calm and constructive manner, allowing for deeper exploration of the topic.

4 Discussion

A child's growth and development are undeniably influenced by the surrounding environment. According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris [11], a child's development reflects the extent to which their environment affects them. The theoretical framework referred to here is Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. Therefore, the data obtained in this study are analyzed using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which is deemed relevant due to its focus on environmental influences on child development and the active involvement of parents. This approach provides a valuable framework for understanding and illustrating the environmental factors that affect the implementation of sexual communication between parents and their primary school-aged children. Mujidah [8] also argues that the reciprocal relationship between the individual and their environment shapes behavior patterns. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory identifies five environmental systems that

surround an individual throughout life: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. These five systems are present in the lives of all individuals, including primary school-aged children.

According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris [11], the microsystem is the setting in which the individual lives and interacts most directly. It includes family, peers, school, and the immediate neighborhood. Within the microsystem, individuals engage in close and reciprocal interactions with social agents such as parents, peers, and teachers. Individuals are not passive recipients of environmental influences; rather, they actively participate in shaping their own microsystems. Mujidah [8] adds that each individual gains unique experiences derived from specific activities, and plays an active role in forming interpersonal relationships within their microsystem. In this context, the social environment—comprising parents, siblings, peers, and teachers [8] significantly influences a child's development from early childhood through adolescence. The microsystem, as the closest environment to the child, plays a central role. Therefore, based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that parents hold the primary responsibility for delivering sexual communication to their primary school-aged children.

Despite beginning to engage with peer groups and showing increased autonomy, children at this stage still perceive parents as the primary source of information and guidance throughout their developmental process. The findings of this study indicate that mothers play a dominant role in delivering sexual communication to children at the primary school level. Nevertheless, this does not preclude the importance of shared responsibilities with fathers, which is also considered crucial in fostering children's comprehension and comfort. In addition, some participants emphasized the importance of gender congruence between the communicator and the child, suggesting that same-gender communication may enhance the effectiveness of sexual discussions. Hence, when sexual communication is effectively implemented within the microsystem, it can significantly influence the healthy development of primary school-aged children. This aligns with previous research by Jerman and Constantine [4], which found that warm and open parent-child relationships contribute positively to the effectiveness of sexual communication. Furthermore, Mujidah [8] asserted that when a family possesses a strong structure and functions in an optimal manner, the outcomes will be beneficial not only for children but for all family members.

According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris [11], the mesosystem refers to the interrelationships among elements within the microsystem. If the microsystem includes parents, teachers, and peers, then the mesosystem represents the interactions and linkages among these entities. Based on the findings of this study, participants indicated that in addition to parents as the primary figures responsible for delivering sexual communication, support from formal institutions such as schools, and non-formal institutions such as religious study centers (e.g., madrasahs), is also necessary. Formal institutions like schools are responsible for providing general knowledge, while non-formal institutions such as religious centers offer guidance based on religious teachings. When parents, schools, and religious institutions convey consistent and harmonized information, it facilitates children's comprehension of sexual communication more effectively.

According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris [11], the exosystem refers to the broader social environment in which an individual is not directly involved but is nonetheless affected by its dynamics. Although children at the elementary school level do not actively participate in this system, its influence remains significant. The exosystem includes institutions such as mass media, social welfare services, legal systems, neighbors, and extended family acquaintances. Referring to the data obtained in this study, participants reported a lack of accessible information related to sexual communication, which serves as a barrier to its effective implementation by parents. This informational gap inhibits parents' ability to convey appropriate knowledge to their children. Furthermore, participants expressed the need for educational media, such as books, to assist in delivering sexual communication effectively

In addition to printed books, the rapid advancement of technology can also be utilized by parents as a supporting medium for accessing information related to sexual communication. Parents serve as the primary predictors of the success of sexual communication between parents and children. Therefore, a set of background factors related to parents also contributes significantly to the implementation of such communication. In Village P, the average parental age ranges from 25 to 45 years, which falls under the category of early to middle adulthood. In Hamlet S, the age range is approximately 29 to 40 years, also categorized as middle adulthood. Consequently, younger parents are more likely to access up-to-date information, while older parents, particularly those entering late adulthood, are less exposed to the latest developments in sexual education and digital literacy.

According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris [11], the macrosystem refers to the overarching cultural context in which an individual lives, encompassing cultural values, religious beliefs, and social norms. Referring to the data obtained, it was found that the cultural values held by each parent in delivering sexual communication vary significantly. These differences are also shaped by the parenting styles that parents themselves experienced from their own caregivers during childhood. This intergenerational influence affects the decisions parents make regarding when and how to engage in sexual communication with their children. Some parents choose to initiate the conversation during the onset of puberty, others do so in response to a child's question, while some prefer to let the child acquire such knowledge independently. Nevertheless, the findings support the view that sexual communication should ideally be introduced as early as possible during the child's developmental stages.

Parental perspectives on the urgency of implementing sexual communication are strongly influenced by prevailing cultural and social norms. Many parents still perceive the topic as taboo or inappropriate to be discussed with children, particularly those in primary school. As a result, they often experience feelings of discomfort, confusion, and awkwardness when attempting to communicate about sexuality. It is therefore essential that parents learn to reduce feelings of unease and negative emotions associated with sexual communication, in order to ensure a more open and effective exchange with their children.

Religion is also perceived to play a distinct and significant role in sexual communication between parents and their primary school-aged children. This is because religion often serves as a foundational framework for conveying understandings of sexuality from a faith-based perspective. Participants echoed this sentiment, highlighting the importance of religious values in shaping how sexual communication is approached within families. Therefore, it is crucial to promote a collaborative integration between religious and scientific perspectives, in order to ensure that the information delivered by parents is both balanced and comprehensive. Since each religion upholds different doctrines regarding sexuality, it is important to adhere to these beliefs while also maintaining a level of openness to biological and scientific perspectives.

According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris [11], the chronosystem refers to environmental changes that occur throughout an individual's life and significantly influence their development. Referring to the research findings, it was revealed that many parents still lack confidence and feel uncertain in delivering sexual communication to their children, primarily due to limited access to information and insufficient current knowledge. These limitations are closely related to the background characteristics of the parents themselves. In Village P, participants reported having an educational background ranging from elementary to junior high school, while in Hamlet S, the educational attainment of parents ranged from vocational high school (SMK) to postgraduate level. Parental education level appears to influence how parents perceive and approach sexual communication. Listyorini and Kusumaningrum [6] explain that the higher the educational level of parents, the more structured and purposeful their communication about sexuality tends to be. Conversely, parents with lower educational

backgrounds often have limited or fragmented knowledge, and tend to delegate the responsibility of sexual education to formal or non-formal institutions. In addition, parental occupation also plays a role in shaping the implementation of sexual communication. In Village P, the most common occupations include housewives, domestic workers, entrepreneurs, employees, tailors, farmers, and a few teachers. In Hamlet S, occupations are primarily housewives, teachers, and educators. When parents are preoccupied with work-related responsibilities, the quality and consistency of communication with their primary school-aged children may be compromised. As such, participants identified time constraints as one of the key barriers to effective sexual communication with their children.

When the results of the anecdotal records are analyzed through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, the following findings emerge. The behavior exhibited by participants positioned physically closer to the researcher during Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) was generally more active, while those seated further away tended to be passive. This indicates that physical and social proximity within the microsystem significantly influences the level of individual engagement in discussion. At the mesosystem level, which involves interactions between various microsystems, both the PKK Group and the Aisiyah Group shared personal experiences during the discussions. The social environment clearly shaped how participants responded to discussions on sensitive topics, such as sexual communication. Consequently, different group dynamics and responses were observed between the two groups.

For instance, during the FGDs with the PKK Group, several participants were observed using mobile phones during the session. This behavior reflects a new cultural pattern emerging from digital dependency, which in turn reduced their focus and participation in the ongoing discussion. When asked about their feelings while engaging in sexual communication with primary school-aged children, PKK Group participants responded with shy smiles and soft laughter. Such reactions suggest that sexual communication is still considered a taboo topic, resulting in hesitant or embarrassed behavior. The contrasting attitudes between the PKK and Aisiyah Groups illustrate differences in prior exposure to relevant information and varying levels of access to sexual communication resources. Thus, the responses provided by participants during the FGDs reflect the influence of all five layers in Bronfenbrenner's ecological model: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem.

5 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the discussion analyzed using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, it can be concluded that parents understand sexual communication as the transmission of basic information regarding sexuality, body boundaries, and self-identity to their children. The implementation of sexual communication by parents involves both supporting and inhibiting factors. The supporting factors identified include parental concern regarding current social interactions, the expression of parental affection, and the desire to protect children from potential harm or unwanted situations. On the other hand, the inhibiting factors include the lack of accessible information, insufficient knowledge regarding sexual communication, confusion about how to appropriately convey such information to primary school-aged children, and fear of creating emotional distance in the parent-child relationship.

These inhibiting factors contribute to parental hesitation in implementing sexual communication, driven by uncertainty, fear, and self-doubt about whether the information shared is accurate and appropriate. When parents remain unsure about the scope and depth of sexual communication appropriate for children, developmentally appropriate adjustments must be made. Specifically for children in primary school age, sexual communication should be aligned with the child's cognitive and emotional maturity, ensuring the information is age-

appropriate—neither excessive nor insufficient. Effective adjustment can be achieved by providing accurate and consistent information, using language that is easily understood by children, and utilizing educational media to support the learning process.

Parents, schools, media, culture, religion, norms, and the broader environment all play an integral role in shaping the ability of primary school-aged children to understand issues related to sexuality. Therefore, these aspects must work collaboratively to ensure that sexual communication is implemented effectively and is adapted to the socio-cultural context of both parents and children. When these elements function in harmony, they can form a preventive framework aimed at protecting children from negative risks, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation.

This study possesses a notable strength in its diverse data sources, derived from participants of varied backgrounds, thus enriching the findings. However, the study is not without limitations. Data collection was conducted through a single round of interviews, which may not have been sufficient to explore the topic in depth. Additionally, only mothers participated as informants, whereas the inclusion of fathers would have offered a more comprehensive parental perspective. The study also acknowledges the importance of incorporating multiple religious perspectives, rather than focusing on a single belief system, as different religions uphold distinct principles regarding sexuality and sexual education.

6 Implication

The implications of this study contribute to enriching the existing literature by complementing prior research on the barriers to effective sexual communication between parents and children. Specifically, the findings provide a contextual understanding of the challenges faced by parents of primary school-aged children, analyzed through the lens of the ecological environments in which individuals live and interact. This ecological perspective highlights the complex interplay of factors that influence the communication process.

Future researchers are encouraged to take into account the various contextual and environmental elements that may affect the research process to ensure the collection of comprehensive and valid data. It is also recommended that subsequent studies improve methodological rigor in terms of writing structure, research procedures, and technical execution, thereby enhancing the quality and reliability of the research outcomes in alignment with real-world conditions.

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