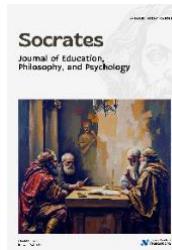




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### Sex Education in Early Childhood: Learning Materials for Young Children's Sexual Development

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**Abstract:** Sexual education should be considered an essential subject in early childhood education. Providing appropriate materials can serve as a preventive measure against immoral acts, particularly sexual violence, which often occurs due to children's lack of understanding about behaviors that may lead to sexual misconduct. This study aims to explain the sexual education materials that can be taught both at school and at home. The research method employed is a literature review. Based on the analysis of eleven studies, several sexual education materials were identified as effective in enhancing children's knowledge and protecting them from sexual violence. These materials include: (1) introduction to body parts and their functions, (2) gender identity, and (3) self-protection

**Keyword:** Sex Education, Material, Children

### INTRODUCTION

In recent years, issues related to sexual behavior have received widespread attention across various media platforms. One of the most concerning cases involves sexual harassment perpetrated by a teacher against his student. Even more alarming, the abuse was committed not against a single child but several, with some victims reportedly becoming pregnant. One of the contributing factors to such behaviors is the lack of understanding and awareness regarding appropriate and inappropriate sexual behaviors(Rahman & Muliati, 2018)

A lack of understanding of sexual education also contributes to the widespread occurrence of sexual violence in Indonesia. Recent data from Komisi Perlindungan Anak Indonesia (KPAI) and Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak (KemenPPPA) show that in 2023 alone, Indonesia recorded 3.883 cases of violations of children's rights. Meanwhile, according to the 2024-2025 report by KemenPPPA, there were 13.845 cases of violence against women and children as of June 2025, the majority involving sexual violence. The recent figures illustrate that sexual violence against children remains a systematic and growing problem, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive age-appropriate sex education from early childhood onward (CNNIndonesia.com).

A significant proportion of victims refrain from disclosing their experiences to others, primarily due to threats of manipulative strategies employed by perpetrators (Azzahra, 2020). This silence not only reflects the coercive power dynamics inherent in abusive relationships but

also underscores the vulnerability of victims in contexts where intimidation is systematically used to suppress disclosure. Children, in particular, are highly susceptible to sexual abuse because of their limited knowledge, physical weakness, and lack of agency, which place them in positions of powerlessness and make them easy targets for perpetrators(Rohmah et al., 2015). Such conditions highlight the urgent need for protective mechanisms and awareness programs that empower children and create safe environments where disclosure can occur without fear of reprisal

Sexual violence and abuse pose a significant threat to the nation, as they can severely harm children both physically and psychologically (Baker et al., 2012; Suhasmi & Ismet, 2021). One of the most effective strategies to protect children from sexual violence is the provision of early sexual education. The increasing number of sexual abuse cases involving children in Indonesia should serve as a warning to parents, teachers, and society at large about the importance of introducing sexual education from an early age (Sasono et al., 2020). Early sexual education has a profound impact on children's development during adolescence, as a proper understanding of sexuality can reduce problems commonly associated with the lack of such knowledge, including unintended pregnancies, sexual violence, and risky sexual behaviors(Astuti et al., 2017).

Early sexual education can serve as a preventive measure against the increasing prevalence of antisocial behaviors (Astuti et al., 2017). In line with Havighurst's developmental task as cited in Hurlock (2009) one essential achievement during childhood is learning about gender and its associated roles.

Providing sexual education from an early age is therefore a preventive responsibility shared by parents, teachers, communities, and government institutions. Such education can begin within early childhood education settings, particularly in kindergartens, where teachers may introduce basic concepts of sexual education at the foundational level. Moreover, teachers can collaborate with parents to emphasize that sexual education should not be postponed until adolescence, but rather initiated during early childhood to ensure children develop a healthy understanding of gender and sexuality.

It is important to note that the provision of sexual education for children is not the same as that for adults. Early childhood sexual education is an effort carried out by surrounding adults with the aim of providing information about gender, self-protection against situations that may lead to sexual abuse, and cognitive education regarding what is permissible or not, as well as understanding bodily functions, potential risks, and prevailing norms of sexuality(Wathon, 2016; Haryono et al., 2018). In addition, the implementation of sexual education for children must be adapted to their developmental characteristics and specific needs. Teachers, therefore, are required to enhance their understanding of both the content and the pedagogical methods that are appropriate to deliver to children in accordance with their cognitive abilities.

## **METHOD**

The method employed in this article is a literature study, which involves a critical examination of existing information, concepts, and findings that are subsequently reformulated into new conceptual insights relevant to the topic under discussion. The sources utilized in this study include journals, books, documents, and scholarly works that are pertinent to the issues being addressed. Creswell (2012) explains that a literature review is essentially a synthesis of journals, books, or other sources required to process the information needed in research. This method was chosen based on the assumption that the necessary research data are already available across various scholarly sources, and that the analysis can be conducted through conceptual and theoretical frameworks. In writing this article, the author draws upon multiple cases related to the materials required for early childhood sexual education. The study specifically reviews 11 articles that are directly relevant to the problems examined in this research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sexual education represents an essential dimension of education. Alongside the family, teachers play a crucial role in providing sexual education to children. However, in many cases, they lack sufficient information and resources on this topic. Based on the results of the literature review, eleven studies were identified that discuss materials related to sexual education which can be introduced to children from an early age.

**Table 1. Review Result**

no	Researcher/Year	Title of Study	Findings
1.	Tri Endang Jatmikowati/ 2015	Model Dan Materi Pendidikan Seks Anak Usia Dini Perspektif Gender Untuk Menghindarkan Sexual Abuse	The study shows that sexual education for children begins with simple aspects, such as introducing body anatomy, explaining reproduction in living beings, and teaching genital hygiene during urination and defecation.
2.	Risty Justicia/ 2016	Program Underware Rules Untuk Mencegah Kekerasan Seksual Pada Anak Usia Dini	The study highlights several important aspects taught to children: "my body belongs to me," good and bad touches, good and bad secrets, prevention, and protection.
3.	Qonita Maulidya Azzahra/ 2020	Pendidikan Seksual Bagi Anak Usia Dini: My Bodies Belong To Me	The study explains knowledge that can be taught to children about their bodies so they can protect themselves and prevent deviant cases around them
4.	Budi Astuti dkk/ 2017	The Development of Early Childhood Sex Education Materials for Early Childhood Education (ECE) Teachers	The study develops materials for children, starting with body parts, gender identity, male-female relationships, reproductive organs and their functions, health maintenance, and ways to protect themselves from sexual crimes
5.	Dewi Fitriani dkk/2021	Mengenalkan Pendidikan Seks Pada Anak Usia Dini Melalui Buku Lift The Flap "Auratku"	One of the materials presented is the concept of aurat boundaries between males and females.
6.	Itoh Masitoh/ 2020	Tingkat Pemahaman Orangtua Terhadap Pendidikan Seksualitas Pada Anak Usia Dini	The study emphasizes that one important aspect of sexual education is how children recognize their bodies and learn to protect them.
7.	Risa Fitri RatnaSari/ 2016	Pentingnya Pendidikan Seks Untuk Anak Usia Dini	The study provides information about reproductive organ functions while instilling values and norms surrounding children.
8.	Sarah Emmanuel Haryono dkk/ 2018	Implementasi Pendidikan Seks Pada Anak Usia Dini di Sekolah	The study explains how sexual education can be implemented with child-appropriate materials, such as the theme <i>Me and You</i> , which introduces gender concept
9.	Nadya Charisa Suhasmi dkk/ 2021	Materi Pendidikan Seks Bagi Anak Usia Dini	The study identifies appropriate sexual education materials for children, including gender identity, self-protection skills, and recognizing situations that may lead to sexual exploitation
10.	Ramtia Darma Putri/ 2019	Budaya Adil Gender Pada Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini Melalui Bermain Peran	The study explains that introducing gender concepts should be done as early as possible so children can understand the function of their gender identity
11.	Safruddin Azizz/ 2014	Pendidikan Seks Bagi Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus/ 2014	The study aims to help children recognize, understand, and manage their development and sexual behaviors of others to avoid deviant acts. It also explains how children should

no	Researcher/Year	Title of Study	Findings			
			protect	themselves	from	malicious
			individuals.			

### Introduction to Body Parts

The introduction of body parts can serve as the initial material in sexual education for children. This material involves teaching children about the body parts they possess and the functions of each part (Jatmikowati et al., 2015; Azzahra, 2020). Jatmikowati and Azzahra emphasize that children should also be taught about the similarities and differences in their body parts. Furthermore, Azzahra highlights that introducing body-part recognition can function as a preventive effort against sexual violence in children. The material is conveyed through the principle '*My body belongs to me*,' which asserts that no one is allowed to touch or handle a child's body without the child's consent (Azzahra, 2020).

According to Astuti et al., (2017) the introduction of body parts includes teaching children that both boys and girls share similarities in their bodies, such as having hands and feet, while also possessing differences. In this material, teachers are expected to explain the physical distinctions between boys and girls in accordance with their biological sex. Fitriani et al., (2021) the introduction of body parts includes teaching children that both boys and girls share similarities in their bodies, such as having hands and feet, while also possessing differences. In this material, teachers are expected to explain the physical distinctions between boys and girls in accordance with their biological sex. Consistent with these views, Masitoh & Hidayat (2020) argue that discussing body parts and organs that may or may not be touched is a crucial aspect of sexual education for children.

This approach does not involve teaching sexual intercourse, but rather age-appropriate learning that helps children recognize themselves and their bodies. Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that introducing body parts to children constitutes the earliest material in sexual education. Familiarizing children with their bodies enables them to understand both the similarities and differences between boys and girls.

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### Gender Identity

Gender identity is a component of sexual education that should be introduced to children from an early age Ratnasari & Alias, 2016; Astuti et al., 2017 Haryono et al., 2018; Suhasmi & Ismet, 2021). Astuti et al (2017) state that one of the essential topics in sexual education for children is introducing the concept of gender. Gender identity is defined as the ability to recognize and categorize oneself as male or female. This identity represents a crucial aspect in understanding and developing self-concept. Topics that can be delivered to children include: (1) explaining the differences between boys and girls, for example in terms of clothing styles, and (2) describing the forms of male and female sexual organs by introducing their proper names rather than using euphemisms.

Haryono et al., (2018) also explain that sexual education for children begins with the concept of gender, where teachers are expected to clarify to children that boys and girls are different, as well as to describe the roles of males and females and the distinctions in their behavioral patterns.

In line with these perspectives Cohen (2009) Ratnasari & Alias, (2016) dan Suhasmi & Ismet (2021), emphasize that introducing gender identity involves explaining that human beings are either male or female, each with their own characteristics. Through gender identity education, children learn to recognize and understand their sex, including being taught the proper names of sexual organs rather than euphemisms. An important consideration in teaching gender identity is to avoid bias or gender inequality, such as reinforcing stereotypes that boys should not cry like

girls. The ultimate goal of gender identity education is to enable children to identify themselves through the characteristics inherent in their bodies.

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that gender identity is an essential component of sexual education and must be taught from an early age. Gender identity teaches children that boys and girls can be distinguished through the physical characteristics of their bodies, particularly their sexual organs. Through gender identity education, children will also learn to establish behavioral boundaries within their social environment.

### **Self-Protection**

Self-protection is not merely about instructing children not to follow strangers or refuse food offered by unfamiliar individuals. Fundamentally, self-protection is closely related to interactions between the opposite sexes. In today's context, the increasingly unrestricted interactions between boys and girls often contribute to immoral behaviors and even sexual violence. Therefore, explaining the norms of appropriate relationships between males and females is essential to help children establish boundaries in their interactions with the opposite sex(Astuti et al., 2017).

Within religious teachings, children are instructed to cover their aurat as a means of protecting themselves from harm. This practice also fosters a sense of modesty, encouraging children to maintain self-control and limit social interactions outside of their family circle. Moreover, the material on covering aurat helps children understand proper ways of dressing, not only in accordance with social norms but also in line with religious perspectives.

Suhasmi & Ismet (2021) further emphasize that the material on covering the aurat is highly appropriate to be taught in early childhood. Since early age represents the initial stage of habituation, children will become accustomed to this practice as they grow older. Covering the aurat helps protect children from unhealthy interactions between boys and girls.

The second aspect is self-protection skills. These skills include: (1) explaining which body parts may or may not be touched, even by parents or family members, (2) providing demonstrations or visual examples of how to protect oneself from individuals who attempt to touch or take the child away, (3) establishing rules such as shouting when feeling uncomfortable and reporting the incident to parents or teachers, and (4) offering explanations about various forms of sexual abuse through different media, both visual and audiovisual.

Self-protection skills can also be reinforced through various programs designed for children. One such program is the *Underwear Rules*. Justicia (2016) explains that the *Underwear Rules* program provides preventive measures against sexual violence in children by offering guidance and strategies to help them protect their bodies from individuals with harmful intentions. Within this program, children are taught about the boundaries of physical contact, with the expectation that they will understand these limits and be able to safeguard themselves from those who may attempt to harm them.

### **Discussion**

The introduction of body parts, gender identity, and self-protection represents the foundational elements of sexual education for early childhood. Teaching children to recognize their body parts and understand their functions provides them with basic knowledge about themselves. This early awareness not only helps children differentiate between similarities and differences in male and female bodies but also serves as a preventive measure against sexual violence. By instilling the principle "*My body belongs to me*," children learn that their bodies are private and must be respected, which strengthens their ability to assert boundaries.

Gender identity further complements this foundation by guiding children to categorize themselves as male or female based on their physical characteristics. Introducing gender identity at an early age is crucial for the development of self-concept, as it helps children understand their roles and social behaviors in relation to others. Moreover, teaching children the proper names of sexual organs, rather than euphemisms, ensures clarity and reduces confusion.

Importantly, gender identity education must avoid bias or inequality, as reinforcing stereotypes may hinder children's healthy social development.

Self-protection, as the third component, equips children with practical skills to safeguard themselves from harmful situations. This includes teaching them which body parts may or may not be touched, how to react when feeling uncomfortable, and how to report inappropriate behavior to trusted adults. Programs such as the *Underwear Rules* provide preventive strategies by helping children establish boundaries of physical contact and recognize unsafe interactions. Combined with religious and cultural teachings, such as covering the aurat to foster modesty, self-protection education empowers children to maintain healthy relationships and resist potential threats.

Building upon the foundational elements of body awareness, gender identity, and self-protection, it is essential to highlight the broader pedagogical and policy implications of early childhood sexual education. Research emphasizes that children who are introduced to accurate body terminology and clear concepts of privacy are more likely to develop self-regulation and resilience in social interactions. This early empowerment not only reduces vulnerability to abuse but also fosters confidence in expressing needs and boundaries. Such outcomes align with international frameworks that advocate for comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) as a rights-based approach to child development.

Moreover, the integration of gender identity education must be approached with sensitivity to cultural and social contexts. While categorization into male and female roles provides children with a sense of belonging, educators must avoid reinforcing stereotypes that limit personal growth. Studies show that gender identity is shaped by both biological and social factors, and children benefit from inclusive approaches that validate diversity and promote equality. By encouraging children to understand gender beyond rigid binaries, educators contribute to healthier self-concepts and more equitable social environments.

Self-protection strategies, such as teaching children to recognize unsafe touch and to report inappropriate behavior, are most effective when reinforced through consistent collaboration between schools, families, and communities. UNESCO's guidance stresses that CSE should be participatory, age-appropriate, and culturally relevant, ensuring that children internalize lessons through interactive methods such as storytelling, role-play, and games. When combined with religious and cultural practices such as modesty teachings, these strategies gain contextual legitimacy, making them more acceptable and sustainable within diverse communities.

Finally, the long-term impact of early childhood sexual education extends beyond individual safety. By instilling values of bodily autonomy, respect, and equality, societies can reduce gender-based violence and promote healthier relationships across generations. The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNESCO emphasize that comprehensive approaches to sexuality education contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those related to health, education, and gender equality. Thus, the inclusion of body awareness, gender identity, and self-protection in early childhood curricula should be recognized not only as preventive measures but also as investments in social justice and human rights.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that sexual education is one of the essential forms of learning that should be introduced to children from an early age. Sexual education for children differs significantly from that provided to adults. Several key materials that can be delivered to children include: (1) introducing body parts along with their functions, (2) gender identity, including an understanding of the role and function of gender identity, and (3) self-protection, which involves teaching children how to safeguard themselves and resist individuals with harmful intentions.

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