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# Demographic Factors Influencing Parental Perceptions of Early Childhood Sexual Education: A Study in Malang City

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## Abstract

This study examines parents' perceptions of the importance of sexual education in early childhood and the demographic factors influencing these views. Using multiple regression analysis, a quantitative survey was conducted with 100 Malang City parents with children aged 4-6 years. The results show that 84% of parents held positive perceptions, while 16% expressed negative views. The F-test yielded a calculated F value of 26.6 with a significance level of 0.000 (<0.05), indicating that gender, age, and parental education significantly influence perceptions of sexual education. Parents with negative views often cited traditional beliefs about child development, considering children unprepared for topics on sexuality. Cultural factors, a lack of exposure to sexual education during their childhoods, and insufficient knowledge about appropriate content for young children further contributed to this stance. The findings suggest that sexual education for early childhood must consider comprehensive education for parents, ensuring they understand appropriate boundaries and materials. Demographic factors such as age, gender, and education must also be addressed when designing educational programs. Limitations of this study include its focus on a single city and a relatively small sample size, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research should expand the geographic scope and examine other factors, such as socioeconomic status or cultural diversity. Addressing these limitations could provide deeper insights into how to design effective sexual education programs that respect cultural contexts while fostering understanding and acceptance among parents.

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## Introduction

Violence against children is a global problem (Cohen & Katz, 2023; Raman et al., 2020; Shawar & Shiffman, 2021) with long-term impacts (Guastaferrero et al., 2022). In Indonesia, the rate of child violence, in general, continues to increase from year to year (Legal Bureau of the Ministry of PPPA, 2023), with cases of sexual violence being the largest. Violence and sexual harassment against children is a sub-type of violence against children. Sexual violence against children is defined as any act of forcing, encouraging, or persuading a minor to participate in sexual acts (Mathews & Collin-Vézina, 2019; Sally, 2019). In 2023, there will be 10,932 cases of sexual violence against children recorded in Indonesia (SIMFONI-PPA, 2024). The rate of violence against children increased by around 30% compared to the previous year (Muhamad, 2023).

Research has demonstrated the detrimental impact of childhood sexual abuse on lifelong mental health (Bebbington et al., 2009; Dube et al., 2005; Lewis et al., 2016), physical health (Daigneault et al., 2017; Noll et al., 2017; Tang et al., 2018), behavioural disorders (Noll & Shenk, 2013; Sanz-Martin et al., 2022; Wamser-Nanney, 2017), depression and suicide (Ng Xiang et al., 2018) and also intergenerational impacts (Bartlett et al., 2017; Greene et al., 2020; Langevin et al., 2020). These losses are predicted to negatively impact health, education, security, the economy, and health (Letourneau et al., 2018).

Data from the Indonesian Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (Kemen PPPA) reveals that sexual violence against children often occurs in environments presumed to be safe, such as households and schools, with perpetrators frequently being individuals known to the victims, including parents, siblings, teachers, and neighbours (Muhamad, 2023; SIMFONI-PPA, 2024). This highlights the complex interplay of individual and contextual factors driving child sexual abuse. A comprehensive and holistic strategy is crucial to address this issue, involving targeted education, heightened public awareness, robust reporting systems, and policies prioritising child safety and well-being (Greene et al., 2020; Langevin et al., 2020; Rudolph et al., 2018).

Prevention efforts have been carried out in various countries to reduce cases of sexual violence against children. The most common is to focus on teaching personal safety skills to school-aged children (Jin et al., 2019; Pulido et al., 2015) as well as early childhood education (Cacciatore et al., 2024; Martin et al., 2020; Wilford, 2023) to strengthen children's knowledge and skills to prevent them from becoming victims. The role of parents is considered essential to prevent sexual violence against children (Plummer, 2001; Wurtele, 2009). Additionally, involving schools and teachers is one of the most commonly implemented violence prevention programs (Aguilar Alonso et al., 2024; Cumper et al., 2024; Walker et al., 2021). The ecological approach has also become a program for preventing sexual violence against children (Miele et al., 2023; Schneider & Hirsch, 2018; Stockman et al., 2023).

Research has also revealed the effectiveness of various child sexual violence prevention programs. One interesting study is by Katz and Cohen (2023), who reviewed 198 reports of sexual violence prevention programs targeting children over the past ten years. Most programs focus on parents, children, and families. Katz and Cohen (2023) found that delivery strategies, evaluation methods, and content of these programs were often not adapted to the developmental stages of children. This indicates a gap in designing a child-centred preventive strategy.

Another systematic review by Micton and Butchart (2009) found that sexual assault prevention programs predominantly teach personal safety skills, such as abuse recognition, body ownership, and disclosure. However, the effectiveness of these programs in reducing sexual violence against children is challenging to measure as they mainly focus on theoretical knowledge and skills. This raises questions about the direct impact of such programs on reducing incidents of sexual violence. There is a need for evidence-based measures to evaluate these programs.

Despite doubts regarding their effectiveness, many studies highlight the benefits of sexual violence prevention programs. Sexual education for children has been shown to increase knowledge and resilience to sexually transgressive experiences (Flores & Barroso, 2017; Ganji et al., 2017; Widman et al., 2016). However, these programs often place a burden on parents (Malacane & Beckmeyer, 2016), who are rarely the primary source of sexual information for their children (Grossman et al., 2018; Noorman et al., 2023). This highlights the importance of collaborative efforts in delivering these programs.

Sexual violence prevention programs in Indonesia have also been implemented, starting with early childhood education through sex education programs (Astuti et al., 2017; Hidayati & Nurhafizah, 2022; Pratiwi et al., 2023). As sexual violence against children continues to rise, questions about the effectiveness of these programs have emerged. Furthermore, sex education for children is still considered taboo in many communities (Cacciatore et al., 2024; Depauli & Plaute, 2018; Noorman et al., 2023; Robinson et al., 2017). Addressing these cultural barriers is crucial to ensuring program success.

Anxiety and controversy surrounding sex education for children often stem from parental perspectives. Many parents believe discussions about sexuality are inappropriate for early childhood development and consider them risky (A. W. Davies et al., 2023; Schneider & Hirsch, 2018). Parents face confusion about initiating such education, including when and how to introduce the topic, what content to cover, and who should deliver it (Depauli & Plaute, 2018;

Malacane & Beckmeyer, 2016; Noorman et al., 2023; Robinson et al., 2017). These uncertainties hinder the implementation of effective education programs.

Another significant concern is the developmental appropriateness of targeting young children in these programs. Children under eight often struggle to comprehend complex concepts, such as understanding that seemingly good individuals might commit crimes (Zhang et al., 2021). This challenge becomes even more pronounced for children under five, raising doubts about program effectiveness for this age group. Tailoring content to developmental stages ensures that children can grasp the intended messages. Additionally, integrating visual and interactive methods may enhance comprehension and engagement.

Attitudes toward childhood sexual education vary greatly depending on cultural, contextual, and temporal factors. However, understanding that the primary goal of sexual education is providing age-appropriate, safety-promoting information about the body, rights, emotions, and protective skills should minimise debates. The aim is to promote a healthy body image and protect physical integrity (Cacciatore et al., 2024; Alonso. et al., 2023). In several countries, changing perceptions have led to broader acceptance and implementation of sexual education programs for children (Alonso. et al., 2023; Depauli & Plaute, 2018; Noorman et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2021). This progress reflects evolving societal attitudes.

This research directly aims to explore parents' perceptions and attitudes towards sexual education for early childhood. Parents play a critical role as primary agents in introducing and teaching sexual education to children. Their involvement helps initiate preventive steps against sexual violence and promotes healthy sexual behaviour in the future. Effective strategies can be developed to address parental concerns by understanding parental views. Additionally, such strategies can improve the overall outcomes of these educational programs.

## Methods

The survey method was utilised to gain insights into parents' perceptions and attitudes toward sexual education for early childhood. Sampling in this study employed non-probability sampling with a purposive sampling technique, targeting parents with children aged 4–6 years. Each family was allowed to respond to only one questionnaire. Of the 150 questionnaires distributed, 132 responses were received (88%). Among these, 22 were excluded for missing over half of the responses. In contrast, another ten were excluded for providing fictitious responses, as they gave identical answers to more than two-thirds of the questionnaire. The final participants in this study comprised 100 respondents, including 11 fathers and 89 mothers.

A demographic form was designed to collect background information about the parents. Seven items gathered demographic data, including gender, age, educational qualifications, occupation, child gender, and child age. Additionally, the questionnaire on parents' perceptions of sexual education for early childhood was developed based on a comprehensive literature review. It included items addressing general demographics, knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding sexual education for early childhood. The instrument consisted of twenty statements measuring parental agreement on a scale of 1 to 4.

Table 1. Variables and Descriptions

Variable	Description
Dependent (Y)	Parents' perception
Independent (X1)	Gender
Independent (X2)	Age
Independent (X3)	Parents' last education

## Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis (H0):

- Gender (X1), age (X2), and parents' last education (X3) do not significantly affect parents' perceptions (Y) regarding sexual education for early childhood in Malang City.
- Statistical formulation:  $H_0: \beta_1 = \beta_2 = \beta_3 = 0$

Alternative Hypothesis (Ha):

- Gender (X1), age (X2), and parents' last education (X3) significantly affect parents' perceptions (Y) regarding sexual education for early childhood in Malang City.
- Statistical formulation:  $H_a: \beta_1 \neq 0, \beta_2 \neq 0, \text{ or } \beta_3 \neq 0$

The data analysis technique employed in this study was multiple regression analysis. This method was used to verify whether the model was free from deviations in classical assumptions. The study also conducted hypothesis testing, specifically the F-test and the  $R^2$  determination coefficient test. The hypothesis to be tested involved determining the influence of gender, age, and parents' last education on parents' perceptions. For hypothesis testing, if the F significance value is  $< 0.05$ ,  $H_0$  is rejected, and  $H_a$  is accepted, indicating that all independent variables significantly influence the dependent variable. Conversely, if the F significance value is  $> 0.05$ ,  $H_0$  is accepted, and  $H_a$  is rejected, indicating no significant influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The determination coefficient test ( $R^2$ ) was assessed by examining the Adjusted  $R^2$  value.

The classical assumption tests conducted using SPSS included the following: (1) The Normality Test was carried out using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test because the data type was on an ordinal scale. This test aimed to determine whether the population data was normally distributed. Decision-making guidelines stated that the population data was not normally distributed if the Sig or probability value ( $p$ )  $< 0.05$ . If the Sig value  $> 0.05$ , the population data was normally distributed. (2) The Multicollinearity Test assessed whether a correlation existed between independent variables in the regression model. Ideally, the regression model should not exhibit multicollinearity among independent variables. The commonly used cutoff values indicating multicollinearity are a Tolerance value  $< 0.10$  or a VIF value  $> 10$ . (3) The Heteroscedasticity Test aimed to identify residual variance inequality across regression model observations. Homoscedasticity occurs when the residual variance remains consistent, while heteroscedasticity indicates variability. A good regression model should not exhibit heteroscedasticity.

## Result

Parents' perceptions of the importance of sexual education for children aged 4-6 years were measured through questionnaires. This questionnaire was distributed and filled out by respondents consisting of parents with children aged 4-6 years. The total number of respondents who participated in this research was 100 parents. Parents' perceptions regarding the importance of sexual education in early childhood can be illustrated in the following table. This table provides a clear picture of how parents view the topic of sexual education for their preschool-age children.

The data collected covers various essential aspects that reflect parents' attitudes and understanding of the need for sexual education at this early age stage. Through analysis of the data contained in the table, we can see variations in parents' opinions and levels of awareness regarding the importance of providing sexual education from an early age. These results are significant for understanding how sexual education can be integrated effectively into the lives of children aged 4-6 years, according to parents' perceptions and support.

Table 2. Gender of respondents regarding the importance of sexual education in early childhood.

No	Gender	F	%
1	Men	32	32%
2	Women	68	68%
<b>Total</b>		100	100%

It is known from the data in Table 1 that the majority of parents who filled out the questionnaire regarding their perception of the importance of implementing sexual education in early childhood were women. 68 people, or 68% of respondents, were mothers. Meanwhile, 32 male or female respondents participated in filling out this questionnaire, or 32%. This data shows that the role of mothers in responding to and providing sexual education to young

children is more dominant than that of fathers. This may reflect that mothers may be more active or involved in children's education and development at an early age, including sexual education.

However, father participation, which reached 32%, also shows that there is significant involvement from both parents in understanding the importance of sexual education for their children who are still in the early stages of development. By knowing the perceptions of both parents, we can get a more comprehensive view of the importance of sexual education in early childhood and how this can be implemented effectively at home. This data is essential as a basis for developing educational programs that suit parents' needs and perceptions, as well as for encouraging more balanced involvement between mothers and fathers in their children's sexual education.

Table 3. Age of respondents regarding the importance of sexual education in early childhood.

No	Age of Parent	F	%
1	20- 28	27	27%
2	29-36	19	19%
3	37-44	35	35%
4	>45	19	19%
<b>Total</b>		100	100%

Based on Table 2 above, it can be seen that the majority of parents who filled out the questionnaire regarding their perceptions of the importance of implementing sexual education in early childhood were in the age range of 37-44 years, with a total of 35 respondents or 35% of the total respondents. According to the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia (MOH RI, 2009), the age range of early adulthood ranges from 25-35 years, while the age range of late adulthood ranges from 36-45 years. This data shows that most respondents in this study were in the late adult age category.

This age is usually when parents have sufficient experience in raising children and tend to have a more mature understanding of the importance of sexual education from an early age. With the majority of respondents being in the late adult age group, it can be assumed that they have high insight and sensitivity to child development issues, including sexual education. This is important to pay attention to because the views and perceptions of parents in this age group can significantly influence how sexual education is implemented at home and in the surrounding environment. Apart from that, the presence of respondents from various age ranges also provides a broader and more varied perspective regarding the implementation of sexual education in early childhood. This allows the development of educational programs that are more inclusive and suit the needs of parents of various age groups.

Table 4. Respondents' final education regarding the importance of sexual education in early childhood.

No	Last Level of Education of Parents	f	%
1	Not receiving education	-	-
2	SD	8	8%
3	SMP	14	14%
4	SMA	53	53%
5	College/University	25	25%
<b>Total</b>		100	100%

Table 4 above shows that the majority of respondents who filled out the questionnaire regarding perceptions of the importance of implementing sexual education in early childhood had a high school education level, with a percentage of 53%. This percentage is higher than that of respondents with an elementary education level of 8%, junior high school of 14%, and tertiary education of 25%. This data shows that most parents who responded to the questionnaire were at the upper secondary education level. This indicates that the group with a high school education background is highly attentive and aware of the importance of sexual education for early childhood. In addition, the participation of respondents with various levels of education -

from elementary school to university, shows that the issue of sexual education in early childhood is attracting attention from various educational circles.

However, it should be noted that respondents with college education, although fewer than high school graduates, also showed significant awareness of the importance of this topic at 25%. Given this diverse distribution of education, it can be concluded that perceptions of sexual education in early childhood are crucial for those with higher education and relevant for those with secondary and primary education backgrounds. It is essential to consider various communication and education strategies that can reach all levels of society so that information about sexual education can be conveyed effectively and evenly.

Table 5. Overall Results of Parental Perceptions Based on Parental Demographic Factors.

Perception	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Agree	84	84%
Disagree	16	16%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

Based on Table 5, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents, 84 people or 84%, think that sexual education is necessary for young children. In contrast, 16 respondents, or 16%, thought that sexual education was not appropriate or relevant to apply to children at that age. To determine the influence of the variables gender, age, and recent education on parents' perceptions regarding the importance of sexual education in early childhood, multiple linear regression analysis and hypothesis testing (F test) were carried out using SPSS version 23 software. The data used in this analysis is data from a questionnaire collected from parents who have children aged 4-6 years, with a total number of respondents of 100 people. The data processing results through multiple linear regression analysis will provide insight into the extent to which factors such as Gender, age, and parental education level influence their perceptions of early childhood sexual education. Hypothesis testing (F test) will determine whether the independent variables significantly affect the dependent variable, namely parents' perceptions regarding the importance of sexual education.

With a deeper understanding of the influence of these demographic factors, sexual education programs and policies can be tailored more effectively to meet the needs and perceptions of parents from diverse backgrounds. This will ensure that sexual education can be implemented in the most relevant and beneficial way for early childhood development.

### Multiple Linear Analysis.

Table 6. Multiple Linear Analysis Output Results

		Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	30,022	2,985		10,056	,000		
	Gender	3,328	,872	,292	3,818	,000	,975	1,026
	Age	-,102	,386	-,021	-,264	,792	,923	1,083
	Last Education	3,926	,494	,620	7,950	,000	,934	1,071

a. Dependent Variable: Persepsi Orang Tua

The table above shows that the multiple linear regression equation for the three independent variables is  $B_1 = 3.328$ ,  $B_2 = -0.102$ , and  $B_3 = 3.26$ . When these values are entered into the multiple linear regression equation, the following equation is obtained:

$$Y = a + B_1X_1 + B_2X_2 + B_3X_3 + e$$

$$Y = 30.022 + 3.328 (X_1) + -0.102 (X_2) + 3.962 (X_3) + e$$

Information :

Y = Perception Disclosure (dependent variable)

a = Constant

B = Regression coefficient  
 X1 = Gender (independent variable)  
 X2 = Age (independent variable)  
 X3 = Last Education (independent variable)  
 e = Error

Thus, an explanation of the multiple linear regression model has been provided formed above are as follows:

- The value (Constant) has a positive value of 30.022. A positive sign means that it shows a unidirectional influence between the independent variable and the dependent variable. This indicates that if all independent variables, including Gender (X1), Age (X2), and parents' latest education (X3), are zero, then the Perception disclosure (Y) that occurs is 30.022.
- The gender regression coefficient value (B1) is 3.328. This shows that the independent variable, Gender (X1), positively influences the dependent variable, parental perception (Y).
- The gender regression coefficient value (B2) is -0.102. This shows that the independent variable, Age (X2), negatively influences the dependent variable, Parental Perception (Y).
- The gender regression coefficient value (B3) is 3.926. This shows that the independent variable, recent education (X3), has a positive influence, and the dependent variable, parental perception (Y).

### *Hypothesis Testing*

This study aims to test the hypothesis regarding the influence of Gender, age, and parents' latest education on their perceptions regarding the importance of sexual education in early childhood. Several statistical analysis methods were used to test this hypothesis, including the coefficient of determination and simultaneous (F) tests. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) measures how much variability in parental perceptions can be explained by independent variables, namely Gender, age, and most recent education. In other words, the coefficient of determination will show how strong the relationship is between these variables and parents' perceptions of early childhood sexual education.

In addition, the simultaneous test (F test) determines whether the independent variables significantly influence the dependent variable. The F test will test the null hypothesis, which states that all regression coefficients of the independent variables are equal to zero, meaning there is no significant effect, against the alternative hypothesis, which states that at least one regression coefficient is not equal to zero, which means there is a considerable effect. The data used in this test came from questionnaires filled out by 100 parents of children aged 4-6 years. Through this analysis, it is hoped that it will be possible to find out to what extent parents' Gender, age, and recent education influence their perceptions regarding the importance of sexual education for their children. The results of this analysis will provide valuable insights for developing sexual education programs that are more effective and appropriate to the needs and perceptions of various groups of parents.

### *Coefficient of Determination*

Table 7. Determination Coefficient Output Results

<b>Model Summary<sup>b</sup></b>				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,674 <sup>a</sup>	,454	,437	4,014

a. Predictors: (Constant), Last Education, Gender, Age

b. Dependent Variable: Parental Perception

From the test results in the table above, the Adjusted R Square coefficient of determination value is 0.437. This value indicates that the independent variables in the study, such as Gender, age, and parents' latest education, contributed 43.7% in influencing the dependent variable. Thus, almost half of the variation in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables considered in this study. This significant Adjusted R Square shows that the regression model used strongly describes the influence between the independent and

dependent variables. However, other factors outside the variables have been considered, influencing the dependent variable.

### *F test*

Hypothesis testing was used in this research to evaluate whether the data results significantly influenced the variables. Researchers use the F, simultaneous, test to assess whether there is a joint influence between the independent and dependent variables. Anova statistical testing is a form of hypothesis testing that allows conclusions to be drawn based on the data or statistical groups obtained. Decisions are taken by looking at the F value in the ANOVA table, with a significance level set at 0.05. The provisions of the F test and ANOVA table are as follows:

- If the significance value  $F < 0.05$ , then the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) is accepted. This means that all independent variables significantly influence the dependent variable.
- If the significance value  $F$  is  $> 0.05$ , then the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is accepted, and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) is rejected. This means that all independent variables do not significantly influence the dependent variable. Thus, the F-test and ANOVA table results will allow researchers to make conclusions about the significance of the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable in this study. The following is a table of hypothesis test results:

Table 8. Hypothesis Test Output Results

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1286,554	3	428,851	26,617	,000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	1546,756	96	16,112		
	Total	2833,310	99			

a. Dependent Variable: Parental Perception

b. Predictors: (Constant), Last Education, Gender, Age

The output results of the hypothesis test in Table 4.58 show that the decision has been taken that the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) is accepted. This can be seen from the calculated F value of 26.6. In addition, the resulting significance value is 0.000, which is smaller than the generally used significance level, namely 0.05. Thus, the conclusion that can be drawn is that this multiple regression model is suitable for use. The independent variables of Gender, age, and parental education simultaneously influence the dependent variable, namely parental perception. This shows that the three independent variables significantly impact parents' perceptions.

### Discussion

The calculation results were generated from a questionnaire distributed to parents with young children in the Lowokwaru sub-district area by the instrument grid previously determined, namely in terms of understanding early childhood sex education and sexual education material that parents can apply to children from an early age. The majority of parents have a positive perception of the importance of sexual education in early childhood, with a percentage of 84% agreeing and 16% disagreeing that sexual education is critical to implement in early childhood. The majority of parents have a positive perception of the importance of sexual education in early childhood, with a percentage of 84% agreeing and 16% disagreeing that sexual education is critical to implement in early childhood. Most people have a favourable view regarding the importance of implementing sexual education in early childhood. This is in line with research conducted by (Bangsawan & Yusria, 2022), where the results showed that parents who had a favourable view of introducing sexual education to children aged 5-6 years amounted to 71%; those with an unfavourable view amounted to 22.41%, and others answered neutral, amounting to 6%.

The main reason parents agree to implement sexual education in early childhood is that sexual education that is given appropriately and according to the child's age and development



can help children understand their bodies and the differences between body parts that can and cannot be touched by other people and can help in preventing sexual abuse by providing a better understanding of body boundaries and teaching children how to get help if they feel uncomfortable and threatened. One of the responses was from Mrs NB, who said that she strongly agreed that education should be applied in the family, school, and community environment because this education was able to reduce and prevent negative things from happening to children. This optimistic view is in line with various studies which state that parents agree because they are starting to understand that sexual education is the best way to prevent negative potential in the future (Cacciatore et al., 2024; Depauli & Plaute, 2018; Guastaferrero et al., 2022; Rudolph et al., 2018). Sexual education in early childhood aims to introduce children to Gender and how to protect it, both in terms of health and hygiene, security and safety (Cacciatore et al., 2024; Alonso. et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2024; , 2021).

Some parents do not approve of sexual education. Namely, some parents are concerned that the sexual education provided may not be according to their values or beliefs or may present information that is not appropriate for the child's age. In addition, some parents feel uncomfortable or unsure how to convey sexuality topics to their children due to a lack of knowledge and find it difficult to discuss it with their children. Based on the questionnaire statements that have been distributed and answered by respondents in this study, those who disagree are the statements stating that in the application of sexual education, the term gender is introduced to children with actual terms such as "vagina and penis." One of the responses was from CH's mother, who works as an entrepreneur, who said that children at that age are not suitable and do not deserve to be introduced to real terms, perhaps other terms that are more polite to hear, such as the term "bird," parents prefer—another term for introducing GenderGender.

Parental anxiety as a result of in-depth sex education has also been highlighted by many studies, including concerns that premature maturity will occur (Depauli & Plaute, 2018; Meyer, 2007). This is due to traditional beliefs about the stages of child development that assume children are not yet emotionally and cognitively mature enough to understand and handle complex and abstract concepts related to maturity and maturity. The theme of sexuality in the broadest sense of intimacy, relationships, desires, and emotions is part of children's lives and the development of their identity. Children often find this information from other sources, including peers, older siblings, the media, books, television, the internet, and even from watching the sexual practices of family pets and others (C Xiang. et al., 2010). Limiting access to comprehensive and accurate sexuality education can reinforce the notion that sexuality is a taboo topic that children or adolescents should not discuss, especially with adults.

Independent variables such as Gender, age, and parents' latest education significantly influence parents' perceptions of the importance of sexual education in early childhood. The importance of implementing sexual education in early childhood is not only determined by these factors but is also influenced by various other factors that shape individual perceptions. A person's perception does not just appear but is influenced by multiple factors such as background, education, age, economics, social, cultural, life experience, and environment. These factors play an essential role in forming a person's attitudes and views towards sexual education, including parents' opinions about the importance of sexual education in early childhood. In further analysis, independent variables such as Gender, age, and parents' education simultaneously influence parents' perceptions of the importance of sexual education in early childhood. This shows that individual characteristics influence how parents view and respond to issues related to sexual education. Thus, understanding the factors that influence parental perceptions can help in designing more effective and relevant sexual education strategies for young children.

Based on the SPSS "Coefficients" output table, a significance value (Sig) was found for the influence of independent variables such as Gender (X1), AgeAge (X2), and last education (X3) on the dependent variable perception (Y) of 0.000. This significance value is smaller than the

generally used significance level, namely 0.05. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant influence between the independent variables (Gender, age, and last education of parents) and the dependent variable (parents' perception of the importance of sexual education in early childhood). This shows that the three independent variables simultaneously influence the dependent variable, which in this case is the parents' perceptions. With these results, it can be concluded that Gender, age, and parental education play an essential role in shaping their perception of the importance of sexual education in early childhood.

The results of this study confirm that further education is needed for parents because some parents still have negative perceptions regarding sexual education for early childhood; a more comprehensive education program is required to provide a correct understanding of the boundaries and appropriate materials about sexual education. This can help eliminate the misunderstanding that sexual education is not suitable for children.

In addition, the educational approach must consider demographic factors such as gender, age, and the last education of parents, which has been shown to influence their perceptions. For example, educational materials and methods may need to be adjusted based on parents' education level or cultural background. Another thing that is no less important is the involvement of government agencies, educational institutions, and related institutions to play an active role in providing information to parents about the importance of early sexual education. Training and seminars can be held for parents to reduce taboos on this topic.

## Conclusion

This study shows that most parents in Lowokwaru District, Malang City, have a positive perception of the importance of sexual education for early childhood. Of the 100 respondents, 84% have a favourable view of the importance of sexual education for children aged 4-6 years, while 16% have a negative perception. This shows that the majority of parents are aware of the benefits of sexual education in helping children understand their bodies, recognise body parts and their functions, and in efforts to prevent sexual abuse. In addition, hypothesis testing shows that demographic factors such as gender, age, and parents' last education significantly influence their perceptions of sexual education for early childhood.

The results of this study can be used as a basis for further research on other factors that may influence parental perceptions, such as socio-economic background, personal experiences related to sexual education, or media influence. In addition, further exploration of the impact of sexual education on early childhood can provide deeper insights. Another thing that further research can do is a long-term study to monitor changes in parental perceptions over time and see how early childhood sexuality education affects children's development and well-being in the long term. Finally, similar studies are needed in other locations or regions to see if these findings are consistent across different geographic and socio-cultural contexts. This will help understand the variation in perceptions and support for early childhood sexuality education in Indonesia more broadly.

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