Exploring Parents' Attitudes, Beliefs, and Comfort Levels Regarding Young Children Sex Education

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Abstract

Parents have a significant impact on how their children learn about and develop their sexuality. Parents are a person's primary source of scientific, social, and personal education, along with their expertise and attitude in these areas. The purpose of this study is to investigate parents' views, convictions, and comfort levels in relation to their kids' sexual education. In light of the critical role parents play in influencing their child's conception of sexuality, this study uses a semi-structured interviewing method to apply the theme analysis approach to fifteen parents. The goal of the study is to investigate the rich and varied viewpoints that parents bring to the conversation on their children's sexual development. Their opinions, convictions, and comfort zones around their kids' sexual development will be recorded throughout the semi-structured interview. Thematic analysis of the transcribed interview will enable the discovery of recurrent themes, patterns, and differences in the perspectives of the parents. The objectives of our study are (1) to identify the range of attitudes and beliefs parents hold regarding their children's sex education (2) to explore the factors influencing parents comfort level in discussing sexuality with their children. (3) to identify the differences between male and female parent attitude, belief and comfort levels. And our findings are anticipated to reveal the spectrum of attitudes and beliefs among parents, shedding light on areas where guidance and support may be needed, and insight from the thematic analysis will contribute to the development of targeted interventions enhancing parental comfort and proficiencies in enhancing their children's sexual development. Additionally, the study aims to inform educators, policymakers, and health care professionals on strategies to promote open and constructive parent-child communication about sexuality.

Key Words: Parents, Attitude, belief, level of comfort of Parents, Child sex education

Sex, Sexuality and Sex Education

Sex and sexuality are integral to daily life, influencing reproduction, intimacy, and pleasure. Neuropsychologist Karl Pribram posits that sex is one of the four basic human drive states, underpinning thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Sex is not related to the frequency of sexual activity but encompasses thoughts, feelings, and behaviors towards others. Sex education, traditionally seen as a simple method of sharing knowledge, has evolved to consider the influence of personality traits, cultural or environmental factors, and external influences. It aims to support young people in making informed decisions about their relationships, sexuality, and mental and physical health. However, it does not encourage sexual behavior. Good sexuality education is based on universally recognized human rights, including the right to adequate

health-related information. Organizations like the Committee for the Rights of the Child, the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities support this right.

Sex Research in Science

The development of successful sex education programs began in the late 19th century, but faced challenges due to a fear-based atmosphere surrounding sexuality. Early literature focused on hygiene, while formal school sex education was scarce before World War II. In the 1980s, the goal of sex education became more complex, with HIV/AIDS becoming a political tool. Parents need to be aware of their child's sexual development and behavior at every stage, as parenting education resources rarely provide information about sexual development. Early childhood is when children first become aware of their sexuality, and this awareness grows throughout preschool and school age. Children's cognitive, linguistic, motor, social, emotional, and sexual development are interconnected, and there is a relationship between children's sexual behavior and their overall development. Understanding children's behavior and how it evolves with age helps assess if a child's sexual activity is normal or causes concern.

Children's Sexual Development and Behaviour

Early childhood sexual development begins in infants, toddlers, and preschoolers aged 0-6, where children can distinguish between genders and engage in sexual play. They are naturally curious and actively learn about the environment through sight, hearing, touching, and copying. Sexual growth does not typically involve deliberate, violent, or sexually explicit behaviors.

Puberty is a significant life stage for children aged 07-12, involving body changes, thoughts, emotions, and interpersonal interactions. It typically starts at age 10 and can vary based on factors like race, nutrition, and family genetics. Sexual behavior begins between ages seven and eight, as children understand social norms and develop modesty. Boys engage in self-touching behaviors more frequently during this stage. By age 13, approximately 7-10% of children engage in explicit sexual activity.

Parents play a crucial role in a child's learning and development of sexuality, as they provide scientific, social, and personal education. Teaching healthy sexual behavior is influenced by parents' knowledge, attitudes, and competence. Children often engage in sexual activities during their developmental stage, and parents can offer sequential and time-sensitive sexuality education. Early discussions about sexuality issues foster safe and healthy attitudes, resulting in the formation of sound sex-related values in children.

Rationale

The study intends to explore how parents view and manage their young children's sexual development because it is acknowledged that the early years are a critical developmental period. It is possible to identify potential influences on children's general sexual learning and development by gaining an understanding of the knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs that parents have regarding this subject. Children frequently get their information from their parents, who are also the most reliable source. They operate as role models, and a child's early understanding of the world—which includes everything pertaining to their bodies and relationships—is greatly influenced by their behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs. It is possible to determine the areas in which parents may want direction and assistance in order to provide a healthy and developmentally appropriate environment for their children's sexual development by investigating the knowledge, attitude, and level of comfort around the sexual development and learning of young children. In order to build focused educational interventions, it also assists in identifying parents' comfort zones and knowledge gaps. In addition, sociological and cultural factors that may influence views on sexuality are taken into consideration when examining parental attitudes and beliefs. As perceptive kids, they take in knowledge from their environment, and parents have a big role in shaping their morals and ideologies. It is possible to gain insight into the possible underlying assumptions of a child's own beliefs regarding the body and relationships by gaining an understanding of parents' knowledge, beliefs, and communication style. A

child's emotional health can be significantly impacted by how their parents handle issues pertaining to the body and sexuality. Thus, taking into account the variety of different viewpoints can help create inclusive, culturally aware parenting education initiatives. Additionally, comparing the different approaches to sex education taken by fathers and mothers offers a chance to consider the possibility of parent collaboration. Fostering a united front in addressing these crucial topics requires addressing how parents may collaborate to provide a thorough and encouraging sex education environment for their children.

Review of Literature

A rigorous review of existing literature is an essential step in research. Reviewing existing studies allows you to identify research gaps and direct your study accordingly. To gain a better understanding of the topic under investigation, the researcher read several dissertations, books, journals and websites. Reviewing of existing literature revealed that although there are studies that look into the need for sex education classes for adolescents, only a few studies look into the needs of adolescents in regards to sex education and if there are any unmet needs. This chapter gives a brief sketch of the existing literature on the concept under investigation.

Ganji, Merghati-Khoei, Maasoumi, Keramat, and Emamian (2015) done a study on

Knowledge and attitude and practice of parents in response to their children's sexual behaviour. It is a population-based survey was conducted in Mazandaran Province, the province in the northern region of Iran, from October to January to evaluate the knowledge and competence of parents in response to their children's sexual behaviour. In this crosssectional study, 600 parents were selected by a cluster random sampling technique. To assess parents' sexual knowledge and competence, the ―Children's Sexual Behaviour Questionnaire (CSBQ)‖ was used to collect data. Mothers and fathers completed the questionnaire separately. Of the total 600 participants (mothers or fathers), 41.3% were fathers. The majority of the parents (66.7%) had an average level of knowledge in response to their children's sexual behaviour, whereas only 5% of the parents had appropriate competence in response to sexual behaviour of their children. There was a positive association between parents' competence in response to children's sexual behaviour and their education, and a significant inverse association was observed between parents' competence and their economic status. In groups with low education, skill-building training courses are essential. Furthermore, appropriate interventions should be designed for groups with high economic status who do not have a high competence.

Zhang and Yuan (2023) conducted a study on Knowledge, attitudes, and practices of parents toward sexuality education for primary school children in China, a cross-sectional study provides insight into the perceptions of Chinese parents of primary school children with respect to sexuality education. A sample of 19,745 parents was surveyed using an online questionnaire in Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei, China. In this study, nearly 90% of parents had positive attitudes toward the sexuality education of children in primary schools. However, Chinese parents had limited knowledge of sexuality education. More than 60% of parents were unaware of the sexuality questions that children may encounter at different ages and did not have any accurate information on child sexual abuse prevention education. Although 70% of parents (both fathers and mothers) reported that they had used television and Internet resources to talk with their children about sexuality and 63% reported that they had read books with their children about sexuality, < 30% reported using appropriate terminology with their children on sexuality education and only 40% reported talking to their children about sexuality comfortably. They suggesting that it is Important to develop culturally relevant training programs for parents of primary schools in Chinese society.

Ballal, et., al (2020) done research on the topic, Sexuality education – do our children need it? Perspective of parents from coastal South India. In this cross-sectional study, 233 parents of adolescent children were assessed regarding their perceptions and practices of providing sexuality education to their children. The mean age of study participants was 44.3 ± 6.5 years. This study demonstrated that, although a

large proportioof parents were aware of the value of sexual education and were in favour of its inclusion in academic curriculum, not all of them were able to effectively provide it to their children.educational contents and strategies to increase mothers' knowledge and attitude.

Martin, Riazi, Firoozi, and Nasiri (2017) conducted a study on a sex education programme for mothers in Iran: Does preschool children's sex education influence mothers' knowledge and attitudes? This study was conducted to examine the effects of a sex education programme on the knowledge and attitudes of the mothers of pre-school children. Eighty mothers of pre-school children were randomly divided into an experimental and a control group. Findings showed no significant differences between the two groups in terms of knowledge and attitudes before the training. After the education and training intervention, however, there was a significant increase in the mean score for both knowledge and attitudes in the experimental group compared to the control group. Study findings suggest that the sex education programme for the mothers of pre-school children can improve their knowledge and attitudes.

Lai, in 2014 done a research on the topic An Exploratory Description of Hong Kong

Parents' Approach to Sex Education for Preschool Children. This study focuses on the views and attitudes of parents toward sex education programs for preschool children in Hong Kong. Three preschools were selected and 27 parents were interviewed individually. The findings reveal that, because of insufficient knowledge and communication skills, most parents lack the confidence to discuss sex-related issues with their children. In addition, they feel uncomfortable when talking about such topics. Nevertheless, all participating parents professed willingness to learn the appropriate skills to discuss sex-related issues with their children.

Summary

These research studies aims to analyze parents' attitudes, beliefs, and comfort levels with young children regarding sexual development and learning, as they significantly influence a child's understanding of these topics, despite the limited studies on parental knowledge and comfort levels.

Methodology

A research method is the totality of all the procedures followed by the investigator to make the research more scientific and valid to the extent possible. It includes all those methods and techniques that are used for the conduct of research. It covers all those methods that are used by the researcher during the course of studying his or her research problem. This chapter presents the research design and the strategies used by the investigator to gather the required data and derive meaning from the data obtained.

Aim

The aim of the present study was to delve into the attitudes, beliefs, and comfort levels of parents regarding their children's sex education.

Research Design

Research design is the framework of research methods and techniques chosen by a researcher. The design allows researchers to hone in on research methods that are suitable for the subject matter and set up the studies for success. A qualitative research design is used to carry out the research. It takes an inductive approach and focuses on process and understanding based on the description of the data obtained. A qualitative approach to research is concerned with the subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions, and behaviour (Kothari & Garg, 2019). The philosophical roots of the qualitative approach are interpretive, humanistic, and naturalisticǁ (Creswell, 2009). It places significant importance on subjectivity. The research paradigm, interpretivism, argues that truth and knowledge are subjective, culturally and historically situated based on lived experiences.

Research Objective

1. To identify the range of attitudes and beliefs parents hold regarding their children's sex education
2. To explore the factors influencing parents comfort level in discussing sexuality with their children
3. To identify the differences between male and female parent attitude, belief and comfort levels

Participants

Participants consisted of individuals who were 23–37 years of age and married. The participants were selected by the convenient sampling technique, a specific type of nonprobability sampling method that relies on data collection from population members who are conveniently available to participate in the study. There were 15 participants: 8 females and 7 males. Data was collected after obtaining verbal consent from the participants.

Inclusive Criteria

The inclusion criteria were any Keralite who have been married for 23–37 years, both male and female, and had a child of age above 3 years.

Exclusive Criteria

Individuals with any kind of disability and who were under 23 years of age were excluded. And also, married individuals with children below the age of 3 are excluded.

Table 3.1

Demographic Details of Participants

Name	Age	Gender	No of Children	Educational Qualification	Job
P1	30	Female	2	MSC	Nil
P2	37	Male	1	MCA	IT Professional
P3	28	Female	3	PLUS TWO	Nil
P4	32	Male	1	SSLC	Astrologer
P5	34	Female	2	PG	Teaching
P6	32	Male	2	Graduate	Business
P7	25	Female	2	Diploma	Nil
P8	23	Female	2	Diploma	Lab Technician
P9	32	Female	1	MSC	Professor
P10	37	Female	2	MPHIL	Assistant Professor

P11	32	Female	2	MBA	Accountant
P12	36	Male	1	MBA	IT Professional
P13	34	Male	1	MA	Business
P14	30	Male	2	MSC	Teacher
P15	35	Male	2	Graduate	Mechanic

Tools Used

A semi-structured interview was used to collect data from the participants. Semi structured interviews are the most common type of qualitative interview, which involves predetermined, open-ended questions but also allows the interviewer to explore themes that emerge during the interview process. The semi-structured interview schedule was prepared beforehand. It included questions on demographic details as well as eight open-ended questions exploring the area of study. The participants were totally free to talk and express their opinions and views. They were not interrupted but probed when necessary. At first, some of the participants struggled to express themselves. And some participants give answers with a single word. Questions, apart from the prepared schedule, were asked in accordance with the responses made by the participants.

Procedure

All the participants were contacted a few days before the interview via text message containing the aim of the study as well as the ethical commitments of the interviewer. The individuals who gave their consent to participate in the study were interviewed according to their convenient date and time. The interview was conducted over the telephone. The nature of the study was explained again, and verbal consent was obtained before beginning the interview. The interview was recorded on the mobile itself. The duration of interviews varied from 10 to 15 minutes and was concluded after ensuring that the participants didn't have any further queries.Participants were thanked for their time and cooperation.

Data Analysis

To analyse the descriptive data collected from the participants, thematic analysis was done. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It is a method of organizing and describing data. It also helps in interpreting various aspects of the research topic. At the initial stage the researcher immersed in the data to the extent that she got familiar with the depth and breadth of content. This included transcript writing and then repeated reading of the transcript and searching for meanings. Initially recorded audio of the semi- structured interview was transcribed entirely and was read thoroughly. After familiarising with the data, the meaning units were extracted and coded which were then categorized according to their conceptual differences and similarities. In the next stage, the codes were sorted to potential themes. A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. The generated subcategories and categories were also compared with each other and reviewed. Then the themes were named and defined. Thematic analysis of interviews were assured of intercoder/interrater reliability since the guide did the coding independently and then compared with the researcher.

Ethical Consideration

The researcher followed Section 8: Research and Publication of Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct by the American Psychological Association, which mentions areas such as privacy, confidentiality of data, informed consent to research, informed consent for recording voices in research, etc. The telephone interview was scheduled as per the convenience of the participant after informing them via text messages, which included the aim and purpose of the study, confidentiality in data collection, the right to withdraw from the study, and the right to demand that the audio recording be stopped anytime during the interview. The researcher started the interview only after explaining all this again and receiving the verbal consent of the participant.

Result and Discussion

The aim of the present study was to delve into the attitudes, beliefs, and comfort levels of parents regarding their children's sexual development. A qualitative research design was used to carry out the research, and 15 participants were interviewed. The data collected was analyzed using thematic analysis. This chapter presents the results obtained from the study and includes a discussion of the themes obtained. The major findings of the exploratory study are summarized below.

Sex education is very beneficial to young children because it provides accurate information about relationships, their bodies, and personal safety. Naturally, children are captivated by their bodies and how they work. Through sex education, they learn about the basic physical differences between boys and girls as well as the changes their bodies will experience as they age. With this knowledge, kids might feel less confused or self-conscious about their appearance, which could lead to increased comfort and self-assurance.

Through sex education, young children are also educated about appropriate boundaries and partnerships. They learn the importance of permission, communication, and respect in partnerships, laying the foundation for future healthy relationships. Early understanding of these concepts might help avert issues such as toxic relationships, bullying, and peer pressure.Also through sex education, young children are also taught about personal safety, including how to recognize and respond to inappropriate touching or advances. With this knowledge, children can protect themselves and seek help if they ever feel unsafe.

Table 4.1

Major themes, subthemes and codes derived from thematic analysis of data regarding the parent's attitude, beliefs in the sex education of children

Themes	Sub Themes	Codes
Developmental Readiness	Age Specific	Basic Understanding
		Body Awarness
		Privacy and Boundaries
		Gender Identities
		Personal Safety

Cognitive

Emotional

Awarness of Feelings

Curiosity

Emotional Relationship

Body Image
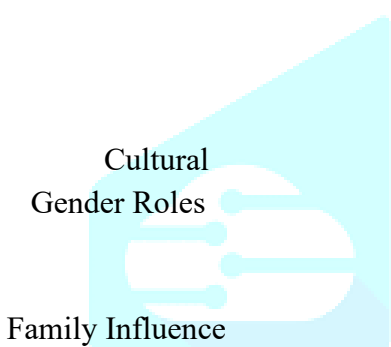
Peer Pressure

Physical

Bodly Changes

Educational

Understanding the Terminology
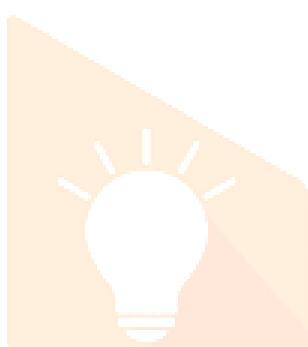
Awarness of Puberty

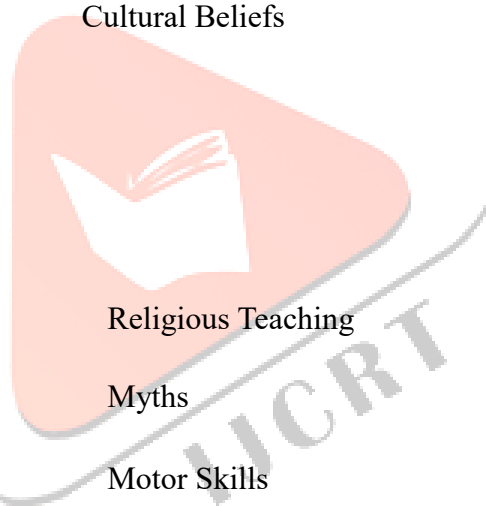Source of Information

Interest in Learning

Cultural Beliefs

Cultural

Gender Roles
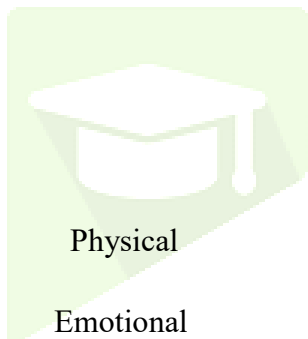
Family Influence

Cultural Practices

Religious

Religious Teaching

Myths

Protectiveness

Physical

Motor Skills

Emotional

Emotional Support

Emotional Availability

Communication

Jokefull

Friendly Pun

Silliness of Puperty

Friendly Tease

Humerous Comparison

Serious

Respectful Language

Consent

Healthy Relationship

		Understanding Changes
		Healthy and Unhealthy Habits
Causal		
		Curiosity
		Personal Experiences
		Pop Culture Reference
Gender		Comfort Level
		Enquiry Difference

Source   Internet

Peer

Closed Ones
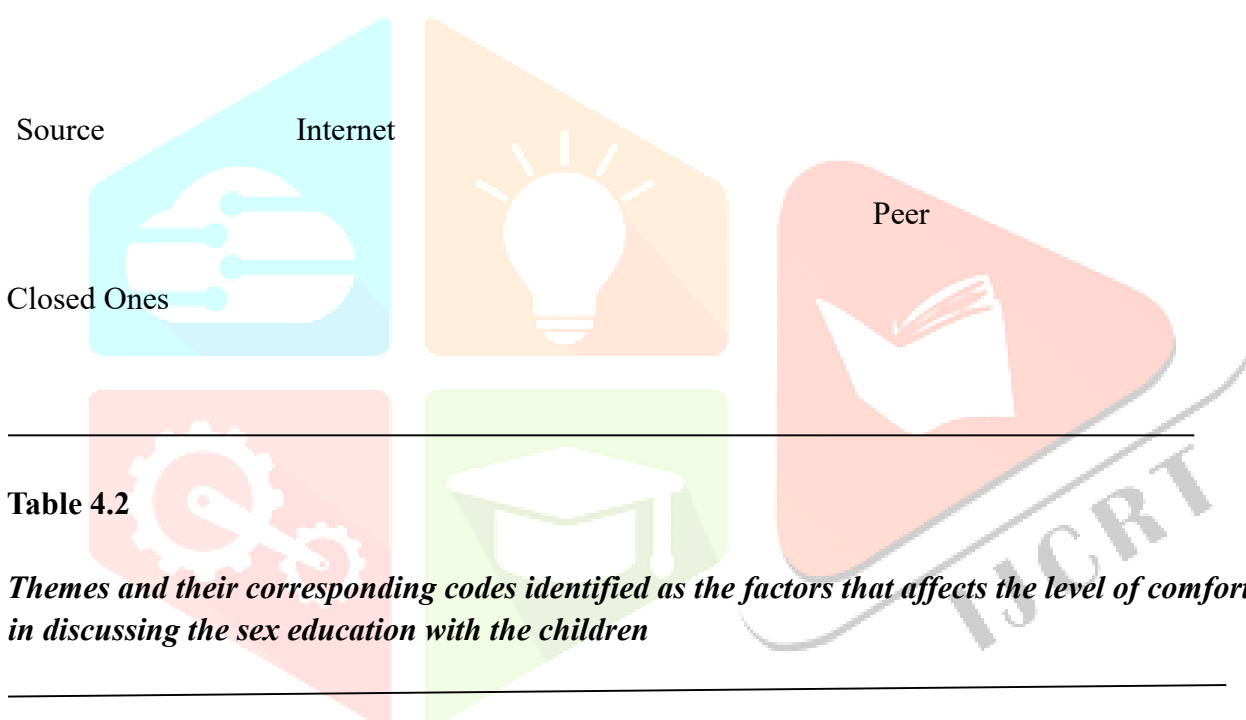
Table 4.2

Themes and their corresponding codes identified as the factors that affects the level of comforts of parents in discussing the sex education with the children

Themes	**Codes**
Challenges and Concerns	Age Specific Difficulty
	Gender
	Interest in the Part of Parents
	Limitation in Knowledge
Openness to Learning	Readiness to Acqire Scientific Knowledege
	Interest to Provide CSE to Children from School or Other Awarness Programme

Role Modelling	Peer Models
	Societal Model

Table 4.1 reveals that there are different attitudes and beliefs shown by different participants in the study. The themes mentioned in the table give an overall idea of the attitude and beliefs of parents toward the sex education of children.

1.Developmental Readiness

The term "developmental readiness" describes the level of a child's cognitive, emotional, and social development at which they are prepared to comprehend and deal with specific sexuality-related topics. It acknowledges that children grow at varying rates and that sex education ought to be customized to each child's unique developmental stage.

The sub-theme **Age-specific** recognizes the need for age-appropriate sex education that takes the child's emotional and cognitive development into account. Parents informed me that ―a 5-year-old is prepared to grasp the fundamentals of body parts and the distinctions between males and girls, whereas a 10-year-old is ready for more in-depth conversations on puberty. So, I used to give information regarding this.‖

The code's *basic understanding* speaks to the child's comprehension of basic sexuality ideas. A youngster who comprehends. One parent communicates that their children were questioned about the process of making babies. ―Then I used to answer a little bit.‖.

Then the code *Body awareness:* The understanding of one's own body and its functions by the youngster is covered by this code. A youngster who can recognize bodily components and comprehend their fundamental functions, for instance, might be prepared to learn about the functioning of the reproductive organs. Most of the parents reported the same.

Privacy and boundaries: This code makes reference to the child's understanding of personal privacy and boundaries. For example, a child who understands that some body parts are private and should not be touched by outsiders is ready to learn about permission and setting limits for themselves. The majority of research participants who had their children before provide clear clarification on this.

Gender identity: This code pertains to the child's understanding of both their own gender identity and the diversity of gender identities. Youngsters who understand that some people might identify as a gender different from the sex they were assigned at birth, for example, may be ready to learn about gender variation and acceptance. Concerns are raised by participants about what happens to kids who witness someone who identifies as gender nonconforming despite their physical attributes.

Personal safety: This code pertains to the child's comprehension of how to be safe in various circumstances, encompassing identifying and handling incorrect conduct. A kid may be prepared to learn about personal safety and boundaries if they can, for instance, tell someone they trust that they can say "no" to unwanted touch and ask for help. ―I used to model for my kids safe measures like kicking or making loud voices when any danger occurred.‖

Educational: The readiness of the child to learn about sexuality in the classroom is the main focus of this code. A youngster who comprehends simple terms like "sperm," "egg," and "menstruation" in relation to sexuality and reproduction, for instance, might be prepared to acquire more intricate ideas. A child's knowledge and comprehension of the emotional and physical changes that accompany puberty is referred to as their awareness of puberty. A youngster who understands that growth spurts and hormonal changes are common during puberty and that it is a normal part of growing up, for example, might be prepared for more in-depth information regarding the impacts of puberty on the body.

Age-appropriate sex education is not provided by all the participants. One of the participants said that they will be getting information regarding this in their school or classroom from teachers‖.

Cultural: The child's cultural preparedness for learning about sexuality is indicated by this code. The values, customs, and traditions that shape a child's conception of sexuality are referred to as cultural beliefs. Premarital sex, for instance, may be more acceptable in certain cultures but taboo in others.

Gender roles pertain to a child's comprehension of the norms and duties that are connected to their gender. A youngster may be ready to learn about gender roles and stereotypes if they comprehend, for instance, that boys and girls may be required to act or dress in particular ways depending on their gender.

The term "family influence" describes how a child's conception of sexuality is influenced by the values and customs of their family. A child reared in a household where sexuality is discussed freely, for instance, might feel more at ease asking their family members about sexuality.

Myths are erroneous beliefs or ideas regarding sexuality that could permeate a child's religious upbringing. For instance, a young person who thinks masturbating is wrong may require assistance in realizing that different religions have differing opinions on this matter. {Child is God's gift,‖ one of the participants teaches their child.}

In general, developmental readiness recognizes that sex education ought to be customized to the age and developmental stage of the child in order to guarantee that they are given knowledge that is suitable, significant, and empowering.

2.Protectivness

In the context of sex education, protectiveness refers to the measures taken by parents and other caregivers to ensure the physical and mental health of their children. It has both mental and physical components.

Physical: This code takes the development and safety of the body into account. For example, parents can show their children how to be protective by teaching them about personal boundaries and how to keep themselves safe from danger. The term "motor skills" describes a child's physical attributes, such as strength and coordination, which can affect their capacity for self-defense. A youngster with strong motor skills, for instance, would be better equipped to defend herself physically in an emergency. —I always teach my child how to react to these situations through physical skills such as biting, beating the person, or pinching them.‖

Emotional: The emotional dimensions of protectiveness are the main emphasis of this code. Giving kids the attention, comfort, and assurance they require in order to feel emotionally safe is known as emotional support. Parents can provide emotional support to their children by, among other things, listening to their worries, acknowledging their emotions, and, if necessary, providing direction and counsel. The ability of a parent to be present and receptive to their child's emotional needs is referred to as emotional availability. A parent who is emotionally available, for instance, can soothe and assist their child when they're angry or in distress. Also, some parents have shown emotional support, like, —I used to tell my child to inform their child that if they face any strange behaviors or attitudes from other people, they should inform their parents immediately, and they are ready to find solutions.‖

In sex education, *protectiveness* refers to making sure kids feel safe and secure, both physically and emotionally. In addition to teaching kids how to defend themselves emotionally and physically, parents and other caregivers are essential in giving them the support and direction they need to successfully negotiate the confusing world of sexuality.

3. Communication

In the context of sex education, communication refers to the way that parents and other caregivers discuss sexuality with their children. It entails utilizing terminology and methods suitable for the child's developmental stage and comprehension. The codes that follow describe several facets of communication in sex education:

Joke full: This code alludes to discussing sexuality through humor. Children can find conversations about sexuality less scary and more interesting when there are pleasant puns, jokes about puberty, friendly teasing, and funny comparisons. One way to lighten the mood and encourage youngsters to talk about these subjects is to make jokes about how awkward puberty is.

Serious: When talking about sexuality, one should do so in a courteous and serious manner, according to this guideline. This includes speaking politely, having a conversation about consent, stressing the value of wholesome relationships, assisting kids in understanding the changes their bodies will experience, and talking about both positive and negative sexual behavior. For instance, having a serious conversation about consent can teach kids how important it is to respect other people's limits.

Causal: Talking about sexuality in a lighthearted and informal way is indicated by this code. This can entail demonstrating interest, opening up about personal experiences, and bringing up pop cultural allusions. Parents relate to and feel more at ease discussing sexuality when various facets of it are explained using examples from TV shows or movies.

Gender: When discussing sexuality in communication, this code takes gender differences into account. This entails being aware of the child's comfort level when it comes to talking about gender-related subjects and being receptive to the ways that boys and girls may approach these conversations differently. A secure and inviting atmosphere for talking about sexuality can be established, for instance, by being considerate of a child's gender identity and speaking in an inclusive manner.

Source: Most of the parents receive information regarding the topic from peers, social media, and the internet. They are not satisfied with the knowledge they have; they also wanted a scientific way to give proper guidance for providing sex education to their children.

In Table 4.2 , the factors affecting the comfort level of parents in discussing the sex education of children are mentioned. The themes identified are ***challenges and concerns, openness to learning, and role modeling.***

In the theme ***Challenges and Concern***, we identified four codes that denote the hindrance of the parents in discussing sexual development and learning with their children. *Age-specific* difficulty refers to the challenges parents face in discussing sexual development with children of different age groups. For younger children, explaining basic concepts like anatomy and reproduction might be challenging. Parents might use simple language and metaphors, like comparing sperm and eggs to puzzle pieces. For adolescents, discussing more complex topics like contraception and consent could be challenging. Parents might need to provide detailed, factual information while addressing emotional and ethical aspects. Most of the parents are having difficulty communicating on the topic of sexuality with the appropriateness of age. They also seek assistance and guidance to improve their skills to communicate sexual development in a scientific way. *Gender difference* refers to the challenges parents encounter when discussing sexual development with children of different genders. When discussing menstruation, most of the male participants feel less comfortable explaining this to their daughters compared to a mother.

They may need to educate themselves on the topic and approach it with sensitivity. When discussing body image, parents may need to address the different societal pressures and expectations that boys and girls face. So addressing these in a scientific way is a difficult task for parents, as reported by the participants. Interest on the part of parents refers to the level of engagement and willingness parents have in discussing sexual development with their children.

Open-minded parents who want to talk to their kids about sexual development should look for information and start conversations with them. On the other hand, parents who find the subject difficult could avoid talking about it, which could leave their kids with misconceptions and gaps in their knowledge. The majority of parents express interest in using NGOs or schools to educate their kids about sexual development. It is less encouraging that they are interested in becoming conscious on their own so that they can provide their kids the necessary formation. The difficulties parents encounter when they don't have complete or correct information regarding their child's sexual development are referred to as knowledge limitations. If a parent was ignorant of the puberty process, they might find it difficult to explain it to their

children. It's possible that they should educate and conduct research before talking to their youngster about it.

Another factor that affects the comfort level of parents in discussing the sex education of children is openness to learning. Openness to learning also influences how comfortable parents are talking to their children about their sexual development. Within this theme, researchers found two codes: interest in giving children CSE through school or other awareness programs, and ready to learn science. Parents who are interested and eager to learn and comprehend scientific facts about sexual development are said to be ready to gain scientific knowledge. In addition, to dispel any misconceptions about how sexual development occurs. Just three participants indicated a desire to learn more about the biological and emotional components of sexual development through scientific means, such as reading books or attending seminars. They also look for trustworthy information sources to educate themselves on subjects like puberty, sexual orientation, and reproductive health, such as medical experts or respectable websites. The majority of individuals get information from peers and social media, in addition to scientific knowledge. Parents' wish to offer more knowledge and resources to their children's education through CSE or other awareness programs is referred to as their interest in doing so. Nearly all of the participants expressed interest in offering CSE, suggesting that parents should encourage their child to take part in workshops or programs focused on sexuality education in schools.

Role modeling is the next major theme identified in the factors affecting levels of comfort. Under this, there are two codes, such as peer models and societal models. Peer models refer to individuals within a parent's social circle or community who serve as examples for how to discuss sexual development with children. When the participants observe a friend who is open and comfortable discussing sexual development with their children, This friend's approach may serve as a model for the parent, influencing their own approach. Many of the parents reported the same. Societal models refer to broader cultural or societal influences that shape how parents discuss sexual development with their children. Cultural norms and expectations around sexuality can influence how parents approach discussions about sexual development. In some cultures, discussions about sexuality may be more taboo or restricted, while in others, they may be more open and accepted. Regarding this, we obtained mixed responses from the participants. Only a few participants are aware of the cultural norms. Media portrayals of sexuality can also serve as societal models. Parents may be influenced by how sexuality is depicted in movies, TV shows, or social media, which can impact their comfort level and approach to discussing sexual development with their children.

Summary and Conclusion

Summary

The study intends to explore the attitudes, beliefs, and level of comfort of parents regarding discussing the sex education of children.

Statement of the Problem

The research titled —Exploring Parents' Attitudes, Beliefs, and Comfort Levels Regarding Young Children's Sex Education‖, is conducted to know how much parents are interested in giving sex education to their children and similarly, to know how much wisdom they have about their own child's sexual development from the developmental stage and to identify their attitude, belief and comfort level towards it.

Findings

- Parents have a positive attitude toward discussing the sex education with children.

- Only very few parents show discomfort in discussing sex education with their children.

- The gender difference between parents and children is the major cause of the discomfort, as reported by the participants.
- The majority of parents are expressing their lack of scientific knowledge as a contribution to this discomfort.
- Also they are open to receiving scientific information in order to foster awareness among their children.

Implications

- Providing direction for parents on age-appropriate sexual education discussions

- Enhancing understanding of how parental attitudes impact children's sexual development and learning
- Providing insights for healthcare professionals working with families on sexual health
- Supporting parents in fostering healthy attitudes towards sexuality in children

- Enhancing awareness of the importance of open communication about sexuality in families

Limitations

- If the interview was conducted through a real-time meeting, more information could have been collected
- Older parents are not included

- Time Consuming

- Some parents hide more information regarding the topic

- Sample size is small

Conclusion

Overall, it can be concluded that the parents have showed positive attitude toward regarding discussing sex education with young children. Also the participants in this research showed interest in gaining scientific knowledge regarding young children sex education.

Suggestions

In this research you can see that there are number of gaps in my knowledge regarding topic ―Exploring Parents' Attitudes, Beliefs, and Comfort Levels Regarding Young Children's Sex Education‖. It might be beneficial in the future to extend the sample to wider groups. The direct sampling should be beneficial, so that an in depth opinions of the participants will get. Also including participants from different geographical area can be considered for the future study.

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Appendix
Informed Consent Form

This study is being conducted by Fathhima Muhsina K.A.,under the guidance of Ms. Akshaya K. Salim Assistant Professor, KMM College, Thrikkakara . The research is being conducted purely for the fulfillment of the academic requirements. Here, I humbly request that you participate and provide information for the study by answering the questions that we are including in the interview. I assure you that the information you provide will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only. Also, the audio will be recorded.

I extend my voluntary consent to participate in the study on Exploring Parents' Attitudes, Beliefs, and Comfort Levels Regarding young children sex education . I understood the importance and purpose of the study, and I agreed voluntarily to participate in it. I have been given the opportunity to learn more details about the study. I understand that all information will be kept confidential and will be used only for educational and scientific purposes, with the omission of all personal details. I understand that I have the option to withdraw at any point in time if I choose to do so without giving any reasons.

Demographic Details

Age :

Gender :

Number of Children :

Educational Qualification :

Job :

Interview Questions

1) How do you respond when your child raises questions about sexuality? Are you able to clearly explain it in a way that they can understand?
2) Do young children have sexual behaviors? What are they?

3) Is it necessary to provide sex education to young children? Why? Do they have knowledge about sexuality even though we don't provide it?
4) Should comprehensive sex education be conducted at the primary class level? If it is organized, would you like to have your child participate in this awareness class? Do these classes need to include only information that helps and protects a child from sexual abuse?

5) How do you respond when you notice the child spends more time touching their private parts or when they go to touch opposite genders private parts?

6) Have you given your child information about safe and unsafe touch? What are they? Likewise, do children have the right to allow and prevent others from touching their own bodies?

7) Do you ever feel uncomfortable sharing sexuality-related topics with your child?

8) Do you want to know more about children's sexual behaviors? Can you please suggest some ways that will help you become aware of it ?