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## Cultural Behaviour and Policy Factors in Sexual Education, Disability Issues, Paedophilia Issues, and The Curriculum

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### ABSTRACT

Sexual education is a critical domain within education and policy development, deeply influenced by cultural norms, societal values, and legislative frameworks. In many traditional societies, these cultural values often create tensions with global educational standards, particularly in the context of sexual education. This study explores the complexities of sexual education in Indonesia, focusing on its intersection with cultural practices, especially in Javanese society, and the challenges faced in providing education to children with disabilities. The research highlights the urgent need for inclusive sexual education, particularly for vulnerable groups, and the importance of addressing paedophilia prevention. Using qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews with pre-service teachers and grounded theory for data analysis, the study examines the gaps in current educational practices and policies. It also underscores the need for culturally sensitive approaches that incorporate traditional values while aligning with international standards. Key findings advocate for the integration of sexual education into formal school curricula, particularly from early childhood, with tailored teaching methods that account for the unique needs of children with disabilities. The study calls for systemic changes to enhance public awareness and mitigate the risks of sexual violence, exploitation, and discrimination.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Sexual education is a crucial domain of educational and policy development, intersecting with cultural behaviours, societal norms, and legislative frameworks. In many traditional societies, cultural values significantly influence perceptions of health and education, often creating tensions between global educational standards and local practices. For instance, in collective societies, the ethos of personal autonomy—a cornerstone of Western bioethics—may conflict with cultural norms that prioritize collective decision-making within families. These dynamics, as observed in cross-cultural variations in selfhood and doctor-patient relationships, illustrate how societal values shape health-related policies and practices (Muna & Samir, 2019).

Sexual education has long been a sensitive subject and a crucial part of health knowledge in general. Sexual education provides young people with the knowledge and skills to make good choices about their sexual health. However, approaches to sexual education are heavily influenced by cultural attitudes and policy factors, which will shape how sexual education will be taught, what information is prioritised, and who benefits from this education (Chavula et al., 2022). Special consideration is needed when addressing disability and paedophilia prevention. The friction between these issues in sexual education not only affects students with disabilities but also contributes to broader social efforts to prevent violence, exploitation, and discrimination.

Therefore, sexual education is one of the important efforts that can be done with the aim of reducing and preventing sexual crimes from an early age. Especially in early childhood with special needs who are minimal in sex education, some of them do not have sufficient knowledge about sexual education and tend to be easily manipulated so that sexual education becomes crucial to be taught to children with special needs, especially at an early age. Unfortunately, teaching sexual education in Indonesia has its own challenges, one of which is the factor of cultural diversity, and the richness of social values in Indonesia is one of the challenges because in some communities, sexual education may still be considered taboo, making it difficult to be applied thoroughly. For example, the concept of "wedi" and "isin" in Javanese culture makes sexual education seen as an impolite discussion (Riza et al., 2022). Similarly, studies in Sub-Saharan Africa indicate that parents frequently lack the knowledge and confidence to address sexual and reproductive health issues, creating barriers to effective communication and education (Adjei & Baah, 2020).

Globally, the involvement of parents in adolescent sexual education is recognized as an effective strategy to mitigate risky sexual behaviours. Research in Ghana highlights that parents with adequate sexual health knowledge are significantly more likely to engage in sexual health education with their children. However, this knowledge is often inadequate, leaving many adolescents without the necessary guidance to navigate puberty and sexual health responsibly (Adjei & Baah, 2020). Societal taboos often result in the silencing of essential discourses, limiting young people's access to accurate information (Waling et al., 2021).

Another similar research in Australia highlights young people's desire for comprehensive, inclusive, and practical education that addresses their lived experiences. However, these programs often lack depth and inclusivity, focusing disproportionately on risk reduction while neglecting topics like consent, pleasure, and the needs of LGBTQ+ communities (Waling et al., 2021). The omission of these elements not only undermines the educational value but also perpetuates misconceptions and vulnerabilities, particularly among marginalized groups.

In the context of children with special needs, sexual education assumes an even greater urgency. According to (Maslahah et al., 2024) children with disabilities face heightened vulnerability to sexual violence due to their increased dependency on caregivers and their susceptibility to manipulation. Their research underscores the lack of appropriate learning media tailored to this group, highlighting the urgent need for structured and systematic educational tools. Despite the critical importance of CSE, it remains inadequately integrated into formal school curricula in Indonesia. Instead, sexual education is often relegated to extracurricular activities, limiting its reach and effectiveness (Maslahah et al., 2024)

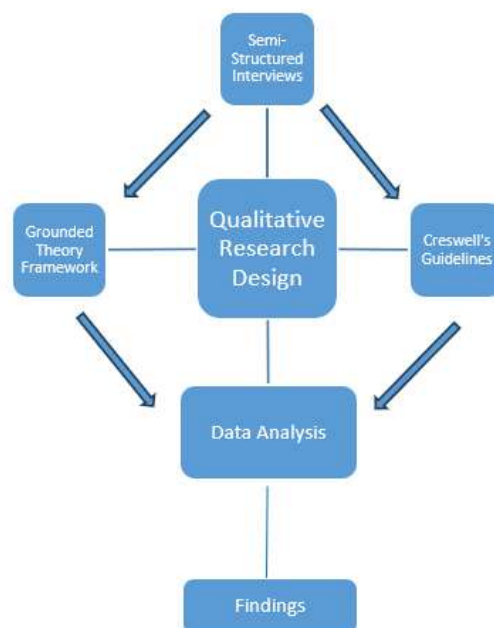
Despite these challenges, comprehensive sexual education (CSE) is increasingly recognized as a critical tool for addressing a range of societal issues, including the prevention of sexual abuse, unintended pregnancies, and sexually transmitted infections (Susanti & Doni, 2021). The lack of integration of CSE into formal school curricula remains a major obstacle in Indonesia. Currently, sexual education is typically relegated to extracurricular activities, which limits its reach and effectiveness. The World Health Organization and UNESCO emphasize that CSE should be embedded within core educational curricula to ensure accessibility and cultural relevance. This approach not only fosters awareness but also aligns with global standards for sexual education by integrating cultural, religious, and societal values into teaching methods (Susanti & Doni, 2021).

Addressing these gaps requires a culturally sensitive approach that aligns with traditional values while adhering to global educational standards. As emphasized by UNESCO and the World Health Organization, embedding sexual education within core curricula fosters accessibility and relevance, ensuring that all students, including those with special needs, receive the knowledge and tools to protect themselves (Goldfarb & Lieberman, 2021). Comprehensive strategies are essential not only to enhance awareness but also to mitigate risks of sexual violence, exploitation, and discrimination from an early age.

This study adopts a comprehensive approach to sexual education by examining the dynamic interplay between global standards and local cultural values, particularly focusing on the Javanese concepts of "wedi" (fear) and "isin" (shame). Despite the global consensus on the importance of sexual education, its implementation in Indonesia is often hindered by deeply rooted cultural barriers. The research underscores the critical need for sexual education among children with special needs, who are especially vulnerable to sexual violence due to their dependence on caregivers and the lack of tailored educational materials. Furthermore, the study positions sexual education as a vital strategy for the early prevention of sexual violence, especially for children with disabilities, marking a shift from traditional focuses such as the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases or teenage pregnancy. It also highlights the necessity of integrating sexual education into the formal school curriculum, rather than treating it as an extracurricular topic, thereby addressing a significant policy gap when compared to UNESCO and WHO recommendations. Recognizing the importance of cultural sensitivity, the study advocates for adapting educational methods to better align with Indonesia's cultural, religious, and societal norms. Finally, the research brings attention to often overlooked populations, such as LGBTQ+ communities and children with special needs, emphasizing the need to address these gaps and vulnerabilities in sexual education. This comprehensive and culturally attuned perspective distinguishes the study from previous research in the field.

## 2. METHODS

This study utilizes a qualitative research design, which is particularly well-suited for investigating the intricate social phenomena associated with cultural behaviors and policy factors. The approach prioritizes in-depth understanding, aligning closely with the study's overarching objectives. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, enabling a thorough exploration of participants' experiences while maintaining a focus on predefined research themes. The participants consisted of pre-service teachers from a private school in Surabaya who are involved in inclusive education. The interviews centered on topics such as social behaviors, relevant policies, personal experiences influencing sexual education for children with disabilities, and concerns regarding paedophilia. To enhance the validity and robustness of the findings, data from the interviews were cross-verified using triangulation, relevant policy documents, and cultural norms drawn from existing literature. For data analysis, a grounded theory framework was employed, allowing theories to emerge organically from the data and ensuring that findings were firmly rooted in participants' lived experiences. The analysis process involved systematic coding, categorizing data into broader themes such as cultural attitudes, policy factors, and sexual education, and conducting iterative comparisons to develop theoretical models that explain the intersecting influences of culture and policy. This process also revealed gaps and inconsistencies in current policies, as well as societal responses to sensitive issues like paedophilia. Thematic development and data transcription further enriched the depth of analysis, with categories refined based on recurring themes identified during initial coding stages. Adherence to Creswell's qualitative research guidelines was maintained throughout the study, including the use of reflexive journaling to capture researcher biases and reflections, member checking to validate interpretations with interviewees, and triangulation to integrate multiple data sources, thereby strengthening the credibility and reliability of the research findings.



**Figure 1.** Schematic diagram of the research methods.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. The influence of cultural and societal values on sexual education.

Indonesia is known for its diverse cultures and customs, which influences how cultural values play a role in society, such as in the economy, religion, and education. In education itself, the values taught mostly focus on manners, especially on the island of Java, this culture of manners is considered at odds with sexual education. (Septiani, 2021). Sexual education is seen as taboo and inappropriate to introduce to children, in fact sexual education is influential in preventing sexual violence that occurs in children. Sexual education does not merely discuss sexual intercourse, but also discusses introduction, vital parts and their functions. Sexual education also teaches about self-definition regarding which body parts can and cannot be touched by others, if in early childhood sexual education is tailored to their abilities and age with a fun approach. Learning media related to children's daily lives are effective for children with disabilities. By connecting the concept of sexual education in everyday life, it can make it easier for children to understand the sexual education material presented.

#### 3.2. Sexual education for children with disabilities and the challenges faced.

Sexual education is a concept that is quite difficult to convey to children with special needs. Children cannot understand why we have to limit ourselves from others and vice versa. Children's readiness to receive sexual education is also different for each individual. (Houtrow et al., 2021). Children's social-emotional development will affect their readiness to receive sexual education materials, while children with disabilities tend not to express much in learning sexual education. Children with disabilities are unfamiliar with the expression of shame.

The challenges faced are in the variety of children's communication abilities in learning, some children still parrot, and some others have a tendency not to want to talk, so that accompanying teachers or pre-service teachers have difficulty in assessing children's understanding. The learning method used uses visual media such as social story media, containing daily stories that can raise the issue of sexual harassment, as a prevention effort.

#### 3.3. Expectations for policy makers on the integration of sexual education

After realising the importance of sexual education for children with disabilities at an early age, and how the cultural sphere affects the acceptance of sexual education especially at an early age. The role of government is important in raising public awareness as a form of support and public service. By integrating sexual education in the curriculum as a subject or, as a separate programme implemented from early childhood levels such as kindergarten to young adulthood or high school. With efforts to increase public awareness of sexual education from an early age, especially for children with disabilities (Breuner & Mattson, 2016) As an effort to prevent sexual violence in children with disabilities at an early age, so that parents do not feel that sexual education is taboo.

### 4. CONCLUSION

The results and discussion sections highlight the significant influence of cultural values and societal norms in shaping sexual education in Indonesia, particularly in regions like Java where modesty is emphasised. Despite cultural taboos, sexual education, especially for children with disabilities, is crucial in preventing abuse and teaching boundaries.

Challenges in communication and emotional development require tailored approaches, such as the use of visual aids and relatable daily-life contexts. A key recommendation is for policymakers to integrate sexual education into national curricula from early childhood to young adulthood, ensuring inclusive and age-appropriate content.

## 5. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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## 6. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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