
Enhancing Reproductive Health Comprehension in Elementary Students: An Educational Intervention in Sidamanik

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Abstract

Reproductive health and sexuality education in elementary schools plays an important role in improving knowledge for students because there is still an opinion that it is a taboo when discussed in general. Reproductive health education can be provided when experiencing puberty and delivered with interactive education so that students understand about reproductive health. Activities are carried out face-to-face with educational methods with lecture, question and answer and discussion techniques. The results of the activity are an increase in the knowledge of elementary school teachers and students about adolescent reproductive health. Thus, efforts to disseminate information about reproductive health for elementary school teachers and students are needed and are expected to be carried out on an ongoing basis. The method used in this community service activity is by conducting educational activities, followed by discussions and questions and answers. After conducting this community service activity, students, teachers are happy and students understand the definition, benefits, types of reproductive organs and how to keep them clean and healthy.

Keywords: *Reproductive, Health, Educational*

INTRODUCTION

A comprehensive understanding of reproductive health from an early age is a crucial foundation for healthy and safe child development, including for children at the elementary school level. In Indonesia, efforts to optimize this understanding through an educational approach are becoming increasingly urgent given the various challenges and risks faced by children in the modern era (Soeiro et al., 2023).

Late childhood, around elementary school age, is an important period where children begin to experience physical and psychological changes towards puberty. Lack of accurate knowledge about their bodies and reproductive functions can lead to confusion, anxiety, and vulnerability to false or misleading information, especially from inappropriate sources in today's digital age. Furthermore, the lack of understanding about reproductive health and body boundaries makes children vulnerable to the risk of sexual violence and abuse. The high number of child sexual abuse cases in Indonesia highlights the need for effective preventive education (Rohmawati et al., 2025)

In addition to vulnerability to sexual violence, ignorance about the process of puberty can also lead to children being unprepared for physical changes such as menstruation in girls or wet dreams in boys. This can impact their physical and psychological health (Seminar et al., 2023). The stigma and taboos that are still inherent in Indonesian society regarding the discussion of sexuality and reproductive issues are also a major obstacle in providing open and

honest information to children (Indraswari et al., 2022). Parents and educators often feel awkward or lack the knowledge and skills to discuss this topic in an age-appropriate manner. A reproductive health education approach at the primary school level aims to provide basic knowledge that is accurate and developmentally appropriate for the age of the child. (Marcelina et al., 2023). This education does not aim to teach sexual behavior, but to equip children with an understanding of: Introduction and basic functions of reproductive organs using appropriate and easy-to-understand terms, Body changes that will occur during puberty, The importance of maintaining personal hygiene, especially reproductive organs, The concept of safe and unsafe touch and how to protect themselves from potential sexual harassment, Having the courage to speak up and report if they experience things that make them uncomfortable to trusted adults. (Pérez-Curiel et al., 2023).

Through proper education, children are expected to be aware of their bodies, able to maintain reproductive health, and have the skills to protect themselves. It also plays a role in reducing stigma and creating a more open environment for discussions on reproductive health. (Chowdhury et al., 2023).

Optimizing the understanding of reproductive health in elementary school children requires a holistic educational approach and involves various parties. Some approaches that are considered effective include: Delivery of Age-Appropriate Information: Using language that is simple, straightforward, and easily understood by elementary school children. The material is delivered gradually according to their cognitive and emotional development. Interactive Learning Methods: Using engaging and participatory methods such as small group discussions, educational games, storytelling, use of visual media (videos, picture posters), or role-playing to help children more easily understand abstract concepts (Wulandari, 2022). Parent and Family Involvement: Parents are the first and primary educators of children. Involving parents in educational programs at school or providing guidance to parents on how to communicate effectively with children about reproductive health is essential to create a supportive learning environment at home Role of Teachers and School Curriculum: Proportionate integration of reproductive health materials into the school curriculum, especially in relevant subjects, is necessary. Teachers need to be equipped with adequate training and materials to be able to deliver this information comfortably and effectively. Collaboration with Health Workers and Professionals: Involving health workers or psychologists in providing education or training for teachers and parents can improve the quality and accuracy of the information delivered (Hasria Alang et al., 2020).

Several policies in Indonesia have recognized the importance of reproductive health for school-age children and adolescents. The Ministry of Health and the Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Culture have issued regulations and action plans related to improving reproductive health, including for school-age children. Child protection organizations such as KPAI and UNICEF Indonesia also actively advocate and support reproductive health education programs for children (Ayu & Dewi, 2023).

However, implementation at the elementary school level still faces challenges, especially related to community perceptions that still consider this topic taboo, lack of readiness of teachers and parents, limited appropriate teaching materials, and the absence of a comprehensive and mandatory standardized curriculum for the elementary level. Research in various regions in Indonesia shows that the reproductive health knowledge of elementary school children still varies and tends to be low in several aspects.k (Indraswari et al., 2022).

RESEARCH METHODS

The method used in this community service activity is by conducting educational activities, followed by discussions and questions and answers.

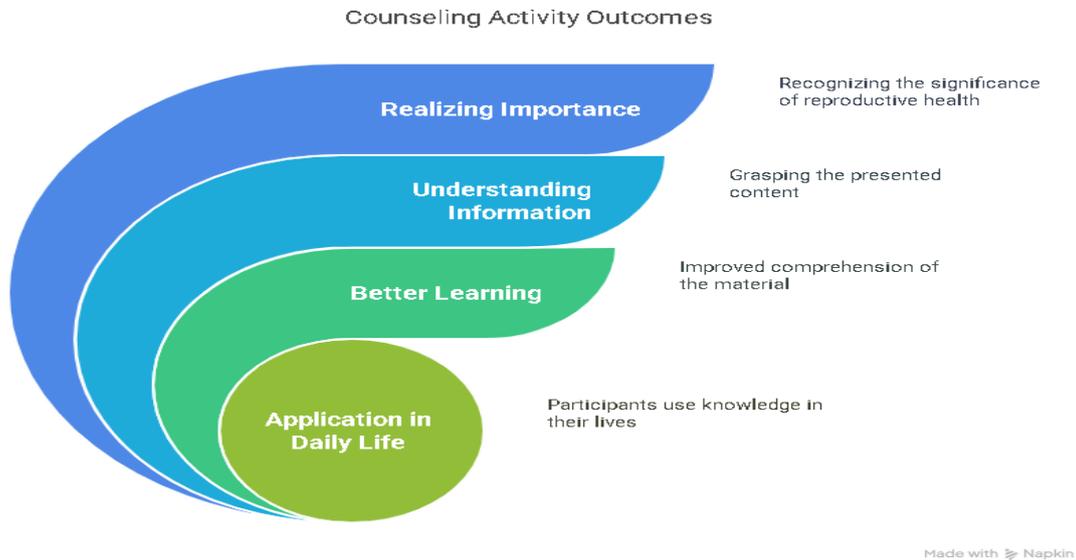


Figure 1. Activity Method Flow Chart

Explanation The method of activities carried out include:

1. Extension Activities

The counseling activity began by explaining and describing the purpose and objectives of the activity. The main purpose of this counseling is for participants to understand the information presented and realize the importance of reproductive health every day. With a good understanding, it is expected that participants can follow the learning better and apply the knowledge in their daily lives.

2. Educational Activities

Educational activities are conducted directly to students. This method was chosen because it is considered more effective in delivering information. In this session, participants were given direct education about reproductive organs and how to maintain reproductive health. With a direct approach, participants are expected to be able to more easily understand the material and remember the information presented.

3. Discussion and Q&A

After the presentation of the material is complete, students are given the opportunity to discuss and ask questions. This question and answer session is very important to ensure that participants really understand the material that has been delivered. Discussion also provides space for participants to share their experiences and views on reproductive health, thus creating an interactive and collaborative learning atmosphere.

With this structured activity method, it is expected that the counseling on reproductive health can have a positive impact on students and increase their awareness of the importance of reproductive health.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The method of community service activities that have been carried out gets results from students and elementary school teachers in Sidamanik where community service activities first contact the Principal and teachers, for implementation, preparation and education. After conducting this community service activity, students, teachers are happy and students understand the definition, benefits, types of reproductive organs and how to keep them clean and healthy. This activity has a good impact and students know about reproductive health. Overall, community service activities run well and smoothly for Sidamanik Elementary School Students.



Figure 2 Reproductive Health Education Activities

After conducting reproductive health education activities, students understand better and can maintain reproductive health and practice it. After the presentation of the material, education can apply it well every day, so that learning can take place smoothly and the health of students is increasing. Overall, community service activities run well and smoothly for Sidamanik Elementary School students.

Discussion

Optimizing the understanding of reproductive health in elementary school children is an urgent need in an effort to create a healthy, safe, and empowered generation. The educational approach is the main instrument to achieve this goal, given the importance of forming knowledge and positive attitudes early on. This discussion will elaborate further on the significance, challenges, effective methods, and policy implications in optimizing the understanding of reproductive health at the primary school level through education.

1. Significance of Optimizing Understanding at Elementary School Age

Primary school age (around 6-12 years old) is a crucial period where children begin to develop awareness about their bodies and self-identity. In the pre-pubertal stage towards the end of primary school, physical changes begin to occur. A correct and adequate understanding of reproductive health at this age serves as an important foundation for several reasons: Prevention of Sexual Violence: Basic knowledge of anatomy, private body parts, the concept of safe and unsafe touch, and the right to one's own body equips children with the ability to recognize risky situations and seek help. The alarming data on child sexual abuse cases in Indonesia shows that preventive education is a vital strategy. (Nurcahyani et al., 2023). Preparing for Puberty. Education about the physical and hormonal changes that will occur during puberty (such as menstruation, wet dreams) helps children feel prepared, reduces anxiety, and prevents confusion that may arise due to lack of information. (Rubiah et al., 2023).

Formation of Healthy Attitudes and Behaviors. An understanding of reproductive organ hygiene and the importance of maintaining reproductive health from an early age forms good

hygienic habits that will carry over into adulthood. Counteracting Misinformation: In the digital age, children are easily exposed to information from various sources that are not necessarily accurate or appropriate. Formal education helps them get the right information from trusted sources (Wulandari, 2022). Establishing Open Communication. Open discussion about reproductive health in schools and families encourages children to feel comfortable asking questions and sharing their concerns with trusted adults. (Ekayanthi et al., 2023).

2. Challenges in Education Implementation in Indonesia

Socio-cultural Stigma and Taboo. Sexuality and reproductive issues are still often considered taboo and sensitive to discuss openly, especially with children. This hampers education initiatives in both family and school settings (Sociological research on community perceptions of children's sexuality education in Indonesia addresses this issue). **Educator and Parent Readiness:** Many teachers and parents feel uncomfortable, lack knowledge, or do not have the appropriate communication skills to discuss these topics effectively and in an age-appropriate manner. Adequate training is often uneven (Widodo & Nita, 2019).

Curriculum Limitations and Inconsistencies: The integration of reproductive health materials in the primary school curriculum may not be comprehensive, standardized, and mandatory in all regions. The availability of interesting and age-appropriate teaching materials is also still limited.

Concerns of Generating "Negative Curiosity": Some people are concerned that providing reproductive health education will actually encourage risky sexual behavior, whereas research shows the opposite, correct information actually equips children to make healthy decisions (Several studies on the effectiveness of comprehensive sex education show that appropriate education does not increase sexual activity but increases risk prevention behavior).(Astri et al., 2016).

3. Effective Educational Approaches for Elementary School Children

Focus on Basic Concepts and Self-Protection. Materials should focus on body recognition (with correct organ names but presented in a straightforward manner), hygiene, sex differences (biologically simple), and safe/unsafe rules related to the body. Use simple language and avoid complex medical terms. Use everyday language that is easy to digest. Appropriate metaphors or analogies can be used to explain abstract concepts, but make sure the message is clear. (Rimawati & Nugraheni, 2019).

Interactive and Fun Methods: Elementary children learn through play, visualization, and hands-on activities. Methods such as telling stories with puppets, using picture books, short educational animated videos, simple role plays about “saying no” to unwelcome touches, or small group discussions are very effective in actively engaging children (Sunarni et al., 2022).

Involving Trusted Parties: Education should be provided by adults the child trusts, namely parents and teachers. Close collaboration between school and family is essential. Training programs for teachers and educational sessions for parents should be intensified. (Nurmawati & Erawantini, 2016). **Positive and Non-Judgmental Messaging:** Education should be delivered in an open, warm and non-fearful manner. The goal is to empower the child, not cause fear or shame. (Sawalma et al., 2023)

CONCLUSION

Optimizing the understanding of reproductive health of elementary school children through an educational approach is an important investment for their future. By providing accurate, age-appropriate knowledge through interactive methods and involving various parties, children can grow into individuals who are aware of their health, able to protect themselves from risks, and ready to face puberty positively. Overcoming social challenges and providing basic knowledge about the body, hygiene, and personal safety at an early age, ensuring policy support and the availability of adequate resources are key to success in realizing an optimal understanding of reproductive health for Indonesian children from an early age.

Educational intervention focused on enhancing reproductive health comprehension in elementary students holds significant promise for improving their knowledge and attitudes towards this crucial aspect of their well-being. By implementing age-appropriate curricula and engaging teaching methods, we can empower young students with the necessary information to make informed decisions about their health as they mature. While the introduction, methodology, results, and discussion sections of this paper provide a comprehensive overview of the intervention and its outcomes, continued research and refinement are essential to optimize its effectiveness and ensure its long-term impact on students' reproductive health literacy. Integrating such programs into the school curriculum, with the support of educators and healthcare professionals, can contribute to a healthier and more informed future generation.

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