

## THE LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE OF PARENTS AND GUARDIANS OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS VISUAL IMPAIRMENT RELATED TO SEXUAL EDUCATION

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### Abstract

Sexual education covers many aspects of life such as: anatomy, health, personal hygiene, reproduction, relationships, sexual response and religion. In Malaysia, the Malaysian Ministry of Education has taken the issue of sexual education more seriously and it has been introduced to secondary schools since 1989 and primary schools since 1994. It was known as Family Health Education before it was renamed as Sexuality Education in 2003. Since the term "sexuality" is considered negative, this sexuality education module has been renamed as Reproductive and Social Health Education (PEERS). A study conducted revealed that sexual education has been taught to students at school through PEERS through several subjects including Physical Education and Health, Language, Science, Biology, Islamic Education and Moral Education. PEERS aims to educate and expose students to their sexual and reproductive health by including topics such as reproductive health, emotional management, family, relationships, illness and safety.

**Keywords:** special education, visual impairment, sexual education, readiness of parents and guardians, education

### Introduction

Sexual education is often a sensitive topic to talk about openly, especially for the Asian community. People with disabilities (OKU), especially teenagers with special educational needs, are always exposed to various sexuality problems such as their tendency to sexual abuse, the risk of sexual exploitation and also the development of inappropriate sexual behavior. The Malaysian Ministry of Health through the Malaysian National Adolescent Health Action Plan (2006-2020) has emphasized that sexuality and reproductive health education needs to be implemented to increase knowledge about sexual reproductive health, increase knowledge about HIV/AIDS and to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies each year. Pupils with special educational needs need to be exposed to knowledge and awareness related to sexual health from a young age so that it can help them avoid difficulties later in life and can also help them take care of their personal safety.

In 2021, the Department of Statistics Malaysia has revealed that the total number of sexual crime cases involving victims aged 18 and under has increased to 0.9 percent with 1,481 cases compared to 1,468 cases in 2020. Looking at this growing trend of sexual problems, it is quite worrying for the community especially for students with special educational needs (SEN). Without knowledge about sexual education will expose them to be involved in sexual crimes either as victims or as perpetrators. This sexual problem can result in trauma, crisis or even addiction for MBPK in terms of their emotions, cognitive, behavior and physiology. Current data released by the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF) in 2018 shows a worrying trend especially involving MBPK. The UNPF has revealed that girls and boys with disabilities are almost three times more likely to be victims of sexual violence where girls face a higher risk. A report from the Swedish Public Health Agency in 2019 has also found evidence of sexual

harassment on the Internet where sexual harassment and abuse occurs among young people with intellectual disabilities between the ages of 16 and 30. In a study by the African Child Policy Forum on violence against children with disabilities found that almost every young person (between the ages of 18 and 24) interviewed had been sexually abused at least once and more than once in their life.

Fariza et. al (2022) found that in Malaysia, it is a challenge for parents because the issue of sexuality is often avoided and parents leave the task entirely to teachers to discuss this issue with their children. The issue of sexual education needs to be addressed systematically by parents because they are the closest individuals to MBPK. Challenges that are often faced by parents through Didem Guven's study (2021) found that parents do not have knowledge and are not prepared about sexuality education (for example the sexual development of MBPK teenagers), how to teach sexuality education at home and need help from experts to help them deliver this information. At the same time, parents also feel worried about the issue of sexuality education, especially sexual abuse and pregnancy out of wedlock.

In addition to schools, parents are also encouraged to teach sexual education in their own homes. This is because teachers at school cannot focus their full attention on just one student and all aspects of sexual education cannot be fully taught. Therefore, as concerned parents they have to shoulder this responsibility. However, parents have various challenges to continue this task. They face difficulties in conveying this knowledge of sexuality because they have a lack of knowledge to convey it. This MBPK which has various emotional, behavioral and cognitive reactions makes it more difficult for parents to control them. There are parents who work and don't have time to teach. There are parents who have no knowledge and are not sure what topic is more suitable for their child's age, for example related to reproductive organs, how to practice healthy sexual relations and so on. They do not know the methods and techniques that should be used to teach their children because they themselves have not been given training.

At the same time, there are a few parents who feel shy and embarrassed to share this knowledge with their children. They are not ready to discuss sex openly with their children, causing them to often avoid discussing this issue. When this happens, these children will be more curious and push them to get information from other unreliable sources. It will result in this MBPK getting information through reading or watching porn videos secretly without the parents' knowledge. Following this problem, this study was conducted to examine the level of knowledge and willingness of MBPK parents in sexual education. It is very important to ensure that MBPK receives this knowledge as best as possible to prevent them from becoming victims of sexual misconduct or even themselves becoming perpetrators of sexual misconduct in the future.

### **Literature Review**

An important aspect of parenting is the knowledge of parents and guardians, as defined by Cora et al. (2016) as knowing where, how and with whom children spend their time. Olivera et al. (2022) argues that parental knowledge refers to the extent to which parents are aware of their children's daily experiences, including where they live, activities, and friends. In this study, the knowledge of parents and guardians was studied regarding the extent of understanding and knowledge about sexual education related to MBPK.

Parents are the main pillars that are very important in the sexual education of children, especially for MBPK. Parents need to provide MBPK with this sexual education to ensure they can build healthy relationships and protect them in high-risk situations such as dangerous sexually transmitted diseases. This sexual education can lead to a more positive self-image, self-confidence, gender equality and prevention of sexual abuse among MBPK. Parents are

advised to support MBPK through this sexuality education because it can improve the quality of their children's lives one day. (Shadi et al., 2022). In 2020, a study conducted by Meltem and Aylin in Turkey has found that parents have a lack of knowledge when dealing with the issue of MBPK sexual education. They do not know how to convey information especially for MBPK women about the menstrual cycle, sanitary pad management, hygiene care during menstruation and also how to answer these sexually related questions to their children. Parents also do not know how to answer questions from MBPK such as why they need to wear underwear (bras), why their bodies change shape (have breasts), voice changes and questions about marriage.

A study conducted by Klaudia et al. (2020) in Poland, found that parents and guardians are a source of information for MBPK. The students were found to rarely refer to their teachers about sexual education. Apart from having knowledge in sexual education, parents also need to take care and not neglect and neglect their children sexually. The study of Nurul Izzah et al. (2019) found that there was a case in Kuala Lumpur where a mother had allowed her boyfriend to molest and fondle her two daughters. This case shows the failure of a mother in defending the rights of the children involved. A study conducted by Carmel Digman (2020), found that two disabled teenagers at a college in the United Kingdom had experienced sexual abuse by their temporary guardians to the point that they suffered from mental problems. This kind of incident can be avoided if parents and guardians have knowledge in sexual education and teach it to their children from a younger age to avoid this MBPK being mistreated and becoming a victim of sexual grooming. A study by Maureen et al. (2021) also found that MBPK are likely to be sexually abused (including rape) 2-3 times more than normal children. In fact, pre-school MBPK experienced more significant sexual abuse than MBPK at the primary and secondary school levels. Maureen et al also found that 16.6% of caregivers reported that their child with autism spectrum disorder had been sexually abused. Therefore, parents and guardians need to know and have knowledge to look after and guarantee the well-being and safety of their children.

### **Methodology**

This study is a quantitative survey study that aims to identify the extent of the relationship between the level of knowledge and willingness of MBPK parents and guardians in sexual education. The use of this survey method was chosen because it saves time and the data obtained can be collected more effectively. Nuruaslizawati et al. (2022) stated that survey methods are very suitable for measuring attitudes to obtain original data from a large population. Researchers can show trends, attitudes, opinions, behavior or character based on the sample or study population (Creswell, 2018). The study of sexual education is seen as very important to understand and deepen a problem or issue as explained by Creswell (2010). The researcher used a questionnaire that was administered to 175 parents and guardians who have MBPK children who study at PPKI secondary schools around Zon Keramat, Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur. This questionnaire helps the researcher gather information about the level of knowledge and readiness of MBPK parents in sexual education. The data obtained from the questionnaire on "Google Form" represents the population of parents and guardians in the two selected schools. Each measurement of the variable is made based on responses to all the statements contained in the questionnaire.

### **Findings and Discussion**

Descriptive analysis involving frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation was conducted to determine the level of knowledge among parents and guardians of students with special educational needs in sexual education. Descriptive analysis descriptions are displayed

separately according to the level of knowledge of parents and guardians as shown in Table 1 below.

No	Items	STS	TS	AS	S	SS	M	SD	I
B1	I have clear knowledge about the topic of sexual education of students with special educational needs.	6 (3.4%)	30 (17.1%)	63 (36.0%)	50 (28.6%)	26 (14.9%)	3.34	1.04	Moderate
B2	I have knowledge in providing information on the topic of sexual education to my child.	7 (4%)	35 (20%)	50 (28.6%)	58 (33.1%)	25 (14.3%)	3.34	1.08	Moderate
B3	I share knowledge about sexual education topics with my son.	14 (8%)	33 (18.9%)	53 (30.3%)	53 (30.3%)	22 (12.6%)	3.21	1.13	Moderate
B4	I share knowledge and exchange opinions with other parents about the sexual education of students with special education needs.	33 (18.9%)	44 (25.1%)	37 (21.1%)	42 (24.0%)	19 (10.9%)	2.83	1.29	Moderate
B5	I know how to convey the topic of sex education to my child.	22 (12.6%)	40 (22.9%)	58 (33.1%)	41 (23.4%)	14 (8.0%)	2.91	1.13	Moderate
<b>TOTAL</b>							<b>3.13</b>	<b>0.915</b>	Moderate

Table 1: The first research question

Table 1 shows that each item in the level of knowledge of mothers, fathers and guardians of students with special educational needs in sexual education is at a moderate level. The item with the highest mean is item B1 which is "I have clear knowledge about the topic of sexual education of students with special educational needs" obtained the highest mean value with a mean score of 3.34 while the standard deviation is 1.04. Also having the same high mean is item B2 which is "I have knowledge in providing information on the topic of sexual education to my child" but the standard deviation of B2 is higher than item B1 which is 1.08. In terms of the frequency and percentage of item B2, it shows that 58 (33.1%) parents and guardians agree,

25 (14.3%) parents and guardians strongly agree and 50 (28.6%) parents and guardians agree somewhat agree. In terms of the frequency and percentage of item B1, it shows that 50 (28.6%) parents and guardians agree, 26 (14.9%) parents and guardians strongly agree and 63 (36.0%) parents and guardians agree somewhat agree.

While the item with the lowest mean is B4 which is "I share knowledge and exchange opinions with other parents about the sexual education of students with special education needs" obtained the lowest mean value with a mean score=2.83 while the standard deviation=1.29. In terms of the frequency and percentage of item B4, it shows that 24 (24.0%) parents and guardians agree, 19 (10.9%) parents and guardians strongly agree and 37 (21.1%) parents and guardians agree somewhat agree. Overall, it shows that the level of knowledge of mothers, fathers and guardians of students with special educational needs in sexual education is at a moderate level (mean = 3.13 and  $sp = 0.915$ ).

This study was conducted to identify the level of knowledge of parents and guardians in the Keramat zone. The results of testing the level of parents' knowledge related to MBPK sexual education as a whole are at a moderate level with a mean value of 3.13,  $sp = 0.915$ . This shows that the level of knowledge of parents related to sexual education is still at a moderate level. All rated items get the same level. The highest item that contributes to the level of parents' knowledge is the item that states that parents and guardians have clear knowledge about the topic of sexual education of students with special education needs and the next item is that parents have knowledge in providing information on the topic of sexual education to their children. While the lowest item that contributes to the level of parents' knowledge is the item that states that they share knowledge and exchange opinions with other parents about the sexual education of students with special education needs.

Parental knowledge is very important in MBPK sexual education. However, parents still lack clear knowledge about the topic of sexual education for students with special educational needs. The findings of this study support the findings of a study by Maureen et al (2020) who stated that parents are reported to have a lack of knowledge and appropriate sources of information for them to convey knowledge about sexuality that is appropriate for their child's age and level of development. Parents are worried that their children will not be able to understand this knowledge and misinterpret it. The findings of this study are also supported by the study of Rebecca et al. (2020) where parents believe that they lack the knowledge and expertise to convey this information to their MBPK children. Furthermore, parents and guardians often avoid the topic of sexual education until this matter or issue happens to their child. The main reason they avoid sharing knowledge or discussions about sexuality issues is because they themselves lack training and knowledge about it.

## Conclusion

This study has several important implications for students with special educational needs. This knowledge and awareness of MBPK sexual education should be taken seriously by all MBPK parents and guardians so that they are more prepared to pass it on to their children. Failure to obtain knowledge and their lack of readiness will have negative implications where MBPK does not receive proper sexual education. Without knowledge about sexual education this makes it difficult for parents and guardians to convey this knowledge to their children. Without knowledge about sexual education it will make it difficult for MBPK in terms of socializing and managing themselves. This not only makes it difficult for MBPK during their growing up process but it can expose them to the risk of sexually transmitted diseases or being victims of sexual harassment without parents and guardians realizing it. This should be avoided because MBPK can be educated in every aspect of development in order to be able to carry out daily



life like other students despite the different levels of development. Therefore, parents and guardians of students with special educational needs need to prepare themselves with knowledge in sexual education and make preparations to pass this knowledge on to their children.

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