

Knowledge, Attitudes And Behaviors Of Children In Early Childhood About Sexuality In An Educational Institution In Pereira. 2021

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Summary

This research explores the knowledge, attitudes and behaviors related to sexuality presented by early childhood children in an educational institution in Pereira, Colombia. A mixed methodological approach was used, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques to collect and analyze data from a representative sample of students, teachers, and parents. The results reveal that children at this stage have basic knowledge about their bodies, sexual differences and some aspects related to reproduction. However, gaps are identified in terms of understanding more complex concepts such as privacy, consent, and protection from sexual abuse. In terms of attitudes, there is a predominance of values such as respect, empathy and acceptance of diversity. However, some stereotyped and prejudiced attitudes related to gender and social roles are also detected. The behaviors observed reflect children's natural curiosity to explore their bodies and build relationships with their peers. However, some cases of inappropriate behavior are identified that could require specialized intervention.

Keywords: sex education, early childhood, knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, sexuality.

Introduction

Sexuality is a fundamental dimension of the human being that manifests itself from the earliest stages of development. In early childhood, children begin to explore their bodies, discover sex differences, and develop basic notions about reproduction. It is in this context where sex education becomes vitally important, providing children with the tools and knowledge necessary to build a healthy, responsible and pleasurable sexuality. In Colombia, Law 1098 of 2001 establishes the mandatory nature of sex education in the curriculum of educational institutions. However, the implementation of this law has faced various challenges, related to the lack of teacher training, the resistance of some sectors of society and the absence of adequate educational materials.

In this sense, it is essential to carry out research that allows us to understand the knowledge, attitudes and behaviors related to sexuality that early childhood children present in the educational context. This information is crucial for designing and implementing effective and contextualized sex education strategies that respond to the specific needs of this population.

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One of the ways human beings learn about themselves and their sexuality is through relationships with others. Most people begin with the natural self-exploration of their own body, a process that even occurs in utero as Kaplan points out and continues after birth. They observe sexual differences and probably simultaneously begin to have sexual interactions. From conception, to the moment of birth, the survival of the human being is closely linked to the sexuality of the species, so it is considered that they must have fundamental knowledge about sexuality, that is: Identification of differences between man and woman, Identification of compelling reasons that justify the existence of differences, positive free speech about sexuality with another young person of your age, Principles about realistic responsible solutions, Identification and knowledge about the immutable changes of adolescence, etc.

In the country, education as a constitutional right is reduced to the acquisition of necessary scientific knowledge, which allows the development of people economically, politically and socially. Sex education, which is understood as the training process aimed at building knowledge, attitudes and values related to sexuality in human beings outside different phases of development and according to the sociocultural context in which the child develops, as well as motivating the development of communication skills, self-knowledge and responsible decision-making with respect to physical and mental health in relation to their sexual health.

Methodology

A mixed-approach research was conducted, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques to collect and analyze data. The target population was made up of early childhood children, teachers and parents of an educational institution in Pereira, Colombia. 2021. Data Collection Technique: Survey: A survey was applied to a representative sample of children, teachers, and parents. The survey included questions about knowledge, attitudes and behaviours related to sexuality. Observation: Non-participant observations were made in the classroom to record the children's behaviors in relation to sexuality. Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and parents to deepen their perceptions of sex education in early childhood. Regarding the analysis of quantitative data: The quantitative data obtained from the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques and the qualitative data are combined from the observations and interviews were analyzed using thematic content analysis techniques.

Results

The results obtained provide valuable information for the design and implementation of effective and contextualized sex education strategies that respond to the specific needs of this population. The results are presented taking into account the following variables: knowledge, attitudes and behaviors.

Knowledge: The results reveal that children in early childhood have basic knowledge about their bodies, sexual differences and some aspects related to reproduction. However, gaps are identified in terms of understanding more complex concepts such as privacy, consent, and protection from sexual abuse. **Attitudes:** In terms of attitudes, there is a predominance of values such as respect, empathy and acceptance of diversity. However, some stereotyped and prejudiced attitudes related to gender and social roles are also detected. **Behaviors:** The behaviors observed reflect children's natural curiosity to explore their bodies and build relationships with their peers. However, some cases of inappropriate behavior are identified that could require specialized intervention.

Children are between four and five years of age, it is evident that they have some knowledge about the differences that exist in family contexts, that is, they recognize how a man and a woman dress, which have been obtained through observation of the environment and the society in which they develop. but not because of the intervention of teachers in the face of the doubts and concerns generated by their sexuality.

Discussion

The results of this research coincide with findings from previous studies that have identified the need to strengthen sex education in early childhood. It is essential that children at this stage receive accurate, timely and adequate information about their sexuality, so that they can develop a healthy, responsible and pleasurable sexuality.

It is not surprising that teachers who care for children consider the convenience of introducing certain knowledge about sexuality to very young people, arousing relevant educational attitudes and assessing behaviours in the field of social relations between children and between them and their educator, contents in which guidance generally predominates. But it goes without saying that the educational field is not a scenario alien to habitual, unalterable behaviors and where their presence or absence must be justified.

Conclusions

It is important to emphasize that sex education in early childhood must be a continuous, respectful process adapted to the age and maturity of the children. It is recommended that you involve the family, school, and community to create a safe and supportive environment for the development of child sexuality.

It must be empowered and prevention promoted, since it gives children the tools to identify and express their emotions, set limits and make informed decisions about their body and sexuality. This can help prevent child sexual abuse and promote healthy, respectful relationships. In the same way, self-knowledge and personal development facilitates the exploration of sexual and body identity in a positive and age-appropriate way, contributing to their self-esteem and emotional well-being and prepares them for later stages: It lays the foundations for a healthy and responsible sex life in the future, including making informed decisions about contraception and sexual and reproductive health. Sex education in early childhood is essential for the integral development of children. In the same way, effective and contextualized sex education strategies that respond to the specific needs of this population are required.

It is also necessary to strengthen teacher training in sex education issues and must promote the active participation of parents and families in the sex education process.

Recommendations

- Design and implement sex education programs adapted to early childhood, articulated from the institutional educational project
- Provide continuous training to teachers on sex education issues.
- Strengthen communication between teachers, parents and families in relation to sex education.
- Raise awareness in the community about the importance of sex education in early childhood.

- Implement the guidelines of the PESCC established by the Ministry of National Education, with the purpose of improving the knowledge, attitudes and practices of students during their training.

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