



Reproductive Health Needs among Children with Hearing and Visual Impairments at SLB Karya Murni Ruteng, NTT Province

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Abstract

Children with Special Needs (hearing and visual impairments) would experience the same sexual development, confusion, and sexual urges as some normal children. This study aimed to explore children's reproductive health needs with special needs (hearing and visual impairments) in SLB Karya Murni Ruteng. A qualitative study with a phenomenological approach was conducted in this study. We included six informants with hearing impairments and seven visual impairments. The principle of sampling technique based on data saturation. Research data collection was carried out through Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on hearing impairments children, assisted by their teacher. For the visual impairment children, data were collected using in-depth interviews. Analysis of the data used in this study using content analysis. The analysis provides in narrative form started from coding each informant's statement relevant to the research, categorizing, and producing themes under the research objectives. The validated data was carried out by triangulating sources that confirm the answers with related parties so that there was the suitability of the answers given to the informants. The triangulation source was taken from the teachers and principals of Karya Murni's SLB, who were always with them both at school and in the school dormitory. The study results explained that most children with special needs did not have a comprehensive understanding of Reproductive Health. Parents and educators' role is still not maximal in giving the understanding of reproductive health to children with special needs. Health services, especially reproductive health, currently being echoed by the central and regional governments, have not touched people with special needs.

Keywords: Reproductive Health, hearing impairment, visual impairment

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is one of 179 countries that signed the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) agreement in Cairo. The conference agreed on a paradigm shift in managing population and development issues, which initially focused on controlling the population and decreasing fertility, then prioritizing health services to fulfill individual reproductive rights for both men and women (1). It gives the state an obligation to fulfill reproductive rights, especially for children and adolescents, as stated in the ICPD action plan. The ICPD action plan suggests that countries worldwide are encouraged to provide complete information to children and adolescents regarding sexual and reproductive health (2).

According to Undang-Undang RI Nomor 36 Tahun 2009, reproductive health is a state of being physically, mentally, and socially healthy as a whole, not solely free from diseases or disabilities related to reproductive systems, functions, and processes in men and women (3). Reproductive health discusses the biological structure of men and women. It includes knowledge of reproductive systems and functions, healthy reproductive age, sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV / AIDS, myths, and sexuality (4).

Children with Special Needs are children with particular characteristics that are significantly different in their humanitarian function dimensions. Children with special needs who are physically, psychologically, cognitively, or socially late in achieving their goals or needs and their maximum potency include hearing impairment, visual impairment, speech disorders, disabilities, mental retardation, and emotional disorders (5). Philosophically or juridically, children with special needs have the same rights to obtain information and education, including some things related to reproductive health. However, in reality, access to information about reproductive health for someone with special needs is minimal (6). Information about reproductive health for children with special needs is useful. Each child is not surprised when he gets the biological changes that occur in him, such as menstruation, wet dreams, and so on, to not get a wrong understanding of this. Lack of knowledge about reproductive health is also one of the causes of rampant sexual abuse and violence among children with special needs (7).

A study in Cameroon showed that women with special needs have a limited understanding of reproductive health and have barriers to accessing health services and information (8). UNICEF (2013) also stated that many adolescents with special needs have limited access to health information. Access to health information about how their bodies changed was minimal. They were taught to be silent and obedient so that their limitations put them at risk of violence and sexual harassment (9).

Karya Murni SLB is the only school in Manggarai that focuses on educating children with special needs (hearing and visual impairments). Based on an initial interview with a teacher at SLB Karya Murni, the research found that the school provided a general knowledge of reproductive health, including men and women's identities. Meanwhile, the knowledge on reproductive health, including everyone's rights to obtain reproductive health services, has never been taught. Therefore, it is necessary to identify early on children's reproductive health needs with special needs so that interventions are carried out more further according to their needs.

OBJECTIVE

The study aimed to explore children's reproductive health needs with special needs (hearing impairment, visual impairment) at SLB Karya Murni Ruteng.

METHOD

A qualitative study with a phenomenological approach was conducted to explore and identify children's reproductive needs with special needs. This research was conducted at SLB Karya Murni Ruteng from May to August 2020. Participants in this study were six hearing impairment and seven visual impairment children. The principle of sampling in qualitative research is to achieve data saturation. The number of participants in this study was 13 people because they had received data saturation.

Research data collection was carried out using Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on hearing impairment children. The researcher involved their teacher in translating the sign language during the FGD process. In-depth interviews were conducted for visual impairment children. Researchers used interview guidelines that were used to assist researchers in asking research-oriented questions.

Analysis of the data used in this study using content analysis. The data presented in narrative form starting from coding each informants' statement and following by making categories and producing themes based on research objectives. The triangulation technique was conducted to validate the information and confirm the answers with related parties. Therefore, the suitability of the answers given to the informants. In this study, source triangulation was taken from teachers and principals of SLB Karya Murni, who were always with them both at school and in the school dormitory.

RESULTS

Respondent Characteristics

This study involved 13 participants with ages ranging from 12-15 years. Most of the participants come from out of town, but they all live in the Susteran Karya Murni Ruteng Foundation's dormitory. The number of hearing impairment participants was six (6) people consisting of three (3) men and three (3) women. The number of visual impairment participants was seven (7) people, consist of two (2) men and five (5) women.

Table 1. Themes and subthemes from qualitative data analysis

Theme	Subtheme
Knowledge and Behavior Related to Reproductive Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of physical changes at puberty • Knowledge of maintaining personal hygiene and health during menstruation / wet dreams • Understanding of sexually transmitted diseases
Problems related to reproductive health and the importance of information related to reproductive health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reproductive health problems in men • Reproductive health problems in women
The need to obtain information related to reproductive health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on how to maintain reproductive health • Information about various disorders of the reproductive organs
The need to receive reproductive health services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reproductive health services by health workers

Knowledge and Behavior Related to Reproductive Health.

1. Knowledge of Physical Changes at Puberty

Most hearing impairments children knew their puberty when they experienced menstruation for girls and wet dreams for boys. There were two other participants (girls) who did not know anything about wet dreams as a characteristic of entering puberty in men. Here are some quotations from participants when asked about physical changes during puberty:

period...on men's wet dream. (P1)
Menstruation on women...on men (i) don't know (shake head) (P2 dan P3)
women have menstruation... men wet dream... (P4)
menstruation and wet dream... (P5)
men...wet dream, women menstruation. (P6)

However, they have limited knowledge of puberty to having experienced menstruation and wet dreams. When asked about other physical changes when entering puberty, only one person (male) answered that other characteristics were growing a mustache and Adam's apple. Meanwhile, most said they did not know while shaking their heads.

there's mustache...developing adam's apple (while touching neck) (P4)

Most of the visual impairments participants already knew about the characteristics of puberty in both boys and girls. They explained entering puberty when they experienced menstruation, breast growth, hair growth in certain areas, and widening hips. Meanwhile, men experienced wet dreams, the growing of a mustache, and Adam's apple, and a voice that is increasingly "cracked" and shoulders get wider. However, one child (girl) only knows that the characteristic of entering puberty is menstruation.

period...other than that?.....mmm...that's it (P10)

2. How to Maintain Personal Hygiene and Health During Menstruation / Wet Dreams

Female participants, both hearing and visual impairments, said that they usually showered and changed sanitary napkins diligently when they experienced menstruation. The male participants explained that they were diligent in cleaning themselves and taking a shower to stay clean when they had wet dreams. Here are some quotes from participants when asked about how to maintain personal hygiene and health during menstruation / wet dreams:

I usually change pads if it's full...then I take a shower too (P10)
immediately clean it... then take a morning shower (P7)

3. Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

They have little knowledge of sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV / AIDS). There are no participants on hearing impairment and visual impairment who know

about the sexually transmitted disease when asked about HIV / AIDS. They said they often heard about the name of the disease but did not understand it.

don't know...(while shaking their heads) (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6)
I don't know what that is... I have heard people said it.. but don't know what did they mean.. (P8)
I don't understand that, ma'am...(P10)
I don't know ... (P11)
though have heard it in the class, (i) don't remember (P13)

Problems related to reproductive health

Some girls, both hearing impairment and visual impairment have experienced problems related to reproductive health. The problem most experienced was vaginal discharge, and 1 participant experienced menstrual disorders.

yes, ma'am... not menstruation... until recently, I still got it, sometimes I use pads (P10)
yes (while shaking head)...several times, smelly... (P2)
sometimes I got the vaginal discharge.. smelly(P3)
When I'm on only one day menstruation period, I couldn't have a period again in 1 month. I have a friend that was not having menstruation for four months, ma'am (P11)

The need to obtain information related to reproductive health

Based on the results of the FGD and in-depth interviews, it was found that hearing and visual impairments children have very little knowledge about reproductive health. They received information about reproductive health from teachers and nun at Karya Murni Ruteng Foundation, but it consisted only of a general description of reproductive health, especially concerning menstruation. Participants also said they had never read books on reproductive health, so that children had difficulty accessing information about reproductive health.

Dorm nun always reminds us to take a bath. And have to change menstrual pad diligently when on the period (P9)
nuns always take care of us when we on the period (P10)
The school has taught us about menstruation (P12).
there's no book on reproductive health here, ma'am... we knew about menstruation because we got it in school

The need to receive reproductive health services

Some female participants had experienced reproductive health problems such as vaginal discharge and irregular menstruation but did not know the cause. There are those among them who are worried, but there are those who think it is normal.

Often have vaginal discharge... usually, I let it like that when I go to school. Sometimes I use pads (P10)
I'm afraid because the liquid is smelly... (P2)

I'm worried, but my friends said it's okay (P3)
I often have a little menstrual blood, ma'am. Usually just one day.. the next day I don't get it anymore (P11)

Health services for children with special needs at SLB Karya Murni Ruteng are so important. It is a significant problem to solve, so the children with special needs who are experiencing reproductive health problems can continually well-prepared for some things that may happen in the future related to their reproductive health. Moreover, they can better maintain their health, especially concerning reproductive health.

DISCUSSION

Knowledge and Behaviour Related to Reproductive Health.

In general, hearing impairment and visual impairment do not have sufficient knowledge about reproductive health, such as knowledge about the characteristics of puberty and sexually transmitted diseases. Based on the results of in-depth interviews and FGDs, it was due to the participants' lack of information. While on the other hand, reproductive health education for children with special needs is useful so that every child is not surprised when they get biological changes. Besides, knowledge about reproductive health helps children to prevent reproductive health problems. According to several previous studies, the lack of information related to reproductive health education and menstruation in children with special needs would affect their menstrual hygiene, personal health patterns, and behavior (10). It was proven by some of the participants who have reproductive health problems, such as vaginal discharge and menstrual disorders. This can be caused by a lack of knowledge regarding reproductive health so that they do not have the effort to prevent this problem.

Problems Related to Reproductive Health

The results showed that many problems occurred, especially related to reproductive health in SLB Karya Murni Ruteng, especially those related to reproductive health. It is revealed that the number of female participants who complain of suffering from vaginal discharge that smells and menstrual cycle disorders. Children's reproductive health problems often arise from a lack of information, knowledge, and awareness to achieve reproductive health. There are so many things related to this problem: recognizing the need to maintain the cleanliness of reproductive organs, identifying reproductive processes, and knowing the impact of sexual health behavior due to lack of information and understanding. In line with Ashari et al. in 2009, there is a significant relationship between knowledge and adolescent sexual behavior in Cirebon City, adolescents who have less information of 3,764 times greater risk of sexual behavior than adolescents who have a good understanding (11).

Needs to Receive Reproductive Health Services

The most urgent need for reproductive health for children with special needs is access to adequate reproductive health information from everywhere related to their conditions. For example, children with hearing impairment need reproductive health information in the form of videos or pictures. Meanwhile, it can be done through counseling or reading media that have used braille letters to make it easier for them to access information for the visually impaired. The useful information related to reproductive health can change their attitudes and behavior to well-maintained their reproductive health.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research on "Identification of Reproductive Health Needs for Children with Special Needs (hearing and visual impairments) at SLB Karya Murni Ruteng, it can be concluded that:

1. Most children with Special Needs do not yet have a comprehensive understanding of Reproductive health.
2. Parents and teaching staff's role is still not optimal in providing an understanding of reproductive health to children who are hearing impairment and visual impairment.
3. Educational policies have not prioritized reproductive health in the education curriculum for children with special needs.
4. Health services, especially reproductive health, currently being echoed by the central and regional governments, have not yet touched people with special needs.

Some recommendation from this study:

1. It is essential to prioritize reproductive health and sexuality on both female and male children and adolescents with disabilities (hearing and visual impairments) so that they able to avoid sexual abuse and exploitation, with the pro-active participation from school, family, and community.
2. The access to the health care that inclusive to people with disability (hearing and visual impairments) ideally have to exist in every public health center and other health care unit, where hospital staff have to be ensured to obtain the ability of understanding and using sign language and understand the rights and needs of people with disability
3. Reproductive health education programs to children and adolescents from the government have to reach out the special schools (hearing and visual impairments).

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