

Hungarian parents' views about sexual education and child sexual abuse in early childhood

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Abstract

Even though comprehensive sex education (SE) is found to be important in prevention of problematic sexual behaviour and child sexual abuse (CSA), parents usually refuse SE before adolescence. Questions of responsibility (either parents or teachers, or both) and content of age-appropriate SE are argued even in sex-positive countries and even more in conservative places such as Hungary. As SE is frequently thought to cover only risks of sexual activities to postpone their beginning, perhaps topics of safe sex, parents and teachers usually think they can wait with till the adolescence. However, children's right to safe and healthy development highlights the need of age-appropriate SE as early as in pre-school years. To develop and implement effective SE programs addressing CSA prevention, professionals need to study parents' (and teachers') views about these topics. Therefore, the goals of our study were to examine parents' views and experiences about sexual development, SE (meaning, timing, topics, responsibility, etc.) and CSA. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 Hungarian parents (10 mothers, 10 fathers) of pre-school children, using convenient sampling. Transcripts of the interviews were coded by two research fellows using ATLAS.tiTM Results presented in the paper cover the network of the code structure related to sexual development and SE, parents' approaches towards SE, mothers' and fathers' opinion about timing of SE, who's responsible for SE, their knowledge and views about CSA. Results are discussed using the UNESCO's guidance on sexuality education.

Keywords: child rights, CSA prevention, pre-school children, parenting, qualitative method.