

Mothers attitudes to school-based sex education in Melbourne and Bendigo

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Background:

School-based sex education is effective in improving sexual health for young people but there is still controversy surrounding its delivery. One argument against school-based sex education is that parents are not supportive of this kind of information being provided to their children. Contemporary, Australian data to verify these arguments are limited. The aim of this research was to explore the viewpoints that parents from Melbourne and Bendigo hold towards the delivery of school-based sex education within the early secondary school context.

Methods:

Data was collected using semi structured interviews. These interviews were conducted through phone calls and in-person. Data was analysed using a thematic analysis approach. The interview schedule was informed by previous similar studies.

Results:

A total of 12 participants took part in this research. All were women with at least one child in years 7-10 at high school, with the total number of children in their respective families ranging from 1-7. Thematic analysis revealed five areas of interest; discussions between parents and their children (1), support for school-based sex education (2), content that should be covered in schools (3), comfort levels (4), and suggestions for how to improve sex education (5). Each of these areas comprised of two to three subthemes, relating to parents' opinions on sex education both at home and at school.

Conclusion:

Overall, mothers were supportive of school-based sex education for their children in years 7-10, though they varied in opinions on what topics they felt should be covered. They expressed interest in receiving more information from schools about their respective sex education programs, so they could support these conversations at home. Mothers felt they would also benefit from more information about where to find resources to support these conversations with their children.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.