

Parental Sexual Education Practices in the Tolotang Indigenous Community of South Sulawesi, Indonesia

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Abstract. The urgency of this research departs from the persistence of culturally rooted taboos that hinder open and accurate sexual education within the Tolotang indigenous community, leaving children and adolescents with limited guidance on puberty, bodily integrity, and protection from sexual violence. This study aims to: (1) explore how parents in the Tolotang community interpret sexual education; (2) describe the forms of sexual education practiced within Tolotang families; and (3) identify the barriers encountered in implementing sexual education. The research employed a qualitative approach with in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation involving 10 purposively selected informants—Tolotang parents with children aged 5–22 years and Tolotang youth aged 17–22 years. Data were analyzed through iterative stages of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The findings show that parents primarily construct sexual education as moral, ethical, and polite conduct in society, closely linked to the cultivation of shame (*siri*), family honor, and strict adherence to customary norms, while sexuality itself is perceived as a highly sensitive and taboo topic for open discussion with children. Sexual education is conveyed implicitly through advice and prohibitions regarding interaction with the opposite sex, behavioral monitoring and control, and parental role modelling. Key obstacles include limited parental knowledge, the absence of culturally grounded institutional guidelines or programs, and strong beliefs that sexual issues should not be discussed explicitly. The novelty of this research lies in its contextualized analysis of sexual education within a specific indigenous belief community. The study contributes conceptually and practically to the development of culturally responsive sexual education models in minority cultural settings.

Keywords: *Sexual Education; Indigenous Community; Parental Practices; Tolotang Indigenous Community; South Sulawesi Indonesia*

INTRODUCTION

Sexual education is a critical component in shaping individuals' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours related to the body, reproductive health, and social relationships. A growing body of international research demonstrates that comprehensive sexuality education supports children and adolescents in understanding bodily boundaries, reducing sexual risk-taking, and enhancing their capacity to make responsible decisions (Indrawati et al., 2024; Nisrin et al., 2024; Gutu et al., 2025; Scull et al., 2024; Utami et al., 2024). Recent studies in diverse educational systems likewise show that well-designed sexual education contributes to improved sexual health literacy, delayed sexual debut, and more equitable gender norms (Maradiya et al., 2026; Felter et al., 2026; Villegas-José et al., 2026; Newton et al., 2025; Diede & Holland, 2025). However, access to high-quality, developmentally appropriate, and culturally sensitive sexual education remains uneven, particularly in communities where traditional values, conservative religious interpretations, and

patriarchal social structures strongly shape daily life (Flanagan, 2024; Fatemi et al., 2024; Faize et al., 2024; Tarver et al., 2026).

These inequalities are especially visible in indigenous and minority cultural groups that continue to uphold customary institutions, authority structures, and moral codes. Studies across various contexts indicate that in many such communities, sexuality remains a taboo topic; as a result, adolescents' knowledge of the body, reproduction, and consent is often fragmented, informal, and heavily mediated by peers or digital media rather than by parents or schools (Heril et al., 2022; Ramadhani, 2023; Beckwith & Drake, 2024; Haruna et al., 2025). The lack of structured, culturally responsive sexual education increases vulnerability to sexual violence, early and forced marriage, sexually transmitted infections, and unwanted pregnancy, particularly among girls and young women (Kearns & DiRienzo, 2024; Utami et al., 2024; Tarver et al., 2026). These patterns underscore the urgency of investigating how sexual education is understood and practised in specific indigenous communities, and how local values can be mobilised to protect children and adolescents rather than inadvertently exposing them to greater risk.

In the indigenous Tolotang community of Sidrap Regency, South Sulawesi, these global concerns intersect with a distinctive cultural and religious landscape. The Tolotang are widely recognised for their strong attachment to ancestral customs, ritual traditions, and the authority of community leaders in regulating social behaviour and moral conduct (Tahara et al., 2023; Jubba et al., 2019, 2023; Hadawiah et al., 2025). Existing literature shows that within Tolotang culture, sexuality is seldom discussed openly either in families or in community forums, so that sexual education tends to occur implicitly, incidentally, and without clear structure (Wihdania et al., 2020; Sholahudin, 2019; Rohman et al., 2023). Prior studies in Indonesia also highlight that limited dialogue between parents and children on sexual matters, combined with low parental knowledge and the absence of culturally grounded sexuality education guidelines, produces significant information gaps among adolescents and young adults (Heril et al., 2022; Ramadhani, 2023; Herlina et al., 2025; Zulkarnain et al., 2025).

This situation generates a fundamental research problem in the Tolotang context: the lack of accurate and comprehensive sexuality information among children, adolescents, and even parents, within a social environment that strongly discourages explicit discussion about the body, reproduction, self-boundaries, and intimate relationships. When sexuality topics are perceived as shameful or inappropriate for family conversation, adolescents tend to rely on peers and unregulated online sources, which may normalise risky behaviours and myths rather than evidence-based knowledge (Beckwith & Drake, 2024; Gutiérrez-García, 2024; Bonilla-Algovia et al., 2024). In Tolotang families, parents' limited understanding of sexual and reproductive

health, the lack of culturally adapted educational materials, and the incomplete integration of sexuality education within formal schooling together intensify young people's vulnerability to harassment, sexual abuse, early marriage, and unwanted pregnancy (Ramadhani, 2023; Rohman et al., 2023; Utami et al., 2024; Krisnawati & Wikansari, 2024). This complex configuration of cultural taboos, structural constraints, and knowledge gaps constitutes the core problem addressed in this study.

To respond to similar problems in other settings, scholars and practitioners have proposed a range of general solutions. Comprehensive sexuality education programmes delivered through schools have been found to improve knowledge, skills, and protective behaviours when they are developmentally appropriate and sustained over time (Utami et al., 2024; Khosla & Tzortziou-Brown, 2025; Berglas et al., 2025). Parallel initiatives emphasise enhancing parent-child communication on sexuality, recognising parents as primary agents of value transmission and everyday guidance (Gutu et al., 2025; Sarman & Tuncay, 2025; Chica-Apolo et al., 2025). Community-based interventions, peer education models, and media literacy approaches have also been used to address misinformation and strengthen adolescents' critical engagement with sexual content in digital and popular culture (Gittings et al., 2025; Scull et al., 2024; Reeves et al., 2024; Chansiri & Wongwatkit, 2024). Nonetheless, these approaches often assume institutional capacity and normative openness that may not exist in tightly knit indigenous communities where customary leaders and religious authorities play a central role.

More targeted solutions have therefore been advanced in the literature to address sexual education in traditional and faith-based communities. One important strand of research focuses on culture-based sexuality education models that deliberately integrate local values, symbols, and moral vocabularies into educational content. In the Bugis context, for example, Awaru (2020) shows that sexual education becomes more acceptable when anchored in indigenous values such as *siri'* (shame) and *pesse* (empathy), allowing sexuality learning to be framed as character and moral development rather than as an indecent or taboo topic. Studies in other cultural settings similarly demonstrate that involving extended family structures and traditional authority figures can improve acceptance and sustain more open communication between parents and children about puberty, bodily boundaries, and consent (Yumna & Nurani, 2023; Herlina et al., 2025; Rhadiyah et al., 2025). Research on religious boarding schools and faith-based institutions in Indonesia also underlines the importance of aligning sexual education with religious teachings to prevent sexual violence while maintaining community legitimacy (Fauzi et al., 2025; Zulkarnain et al., 2025).

Another specific line of work highlights parental training and educator capacity building as key mechanisms for improving the quality of sexual education. Islami et al. (2022) demonstrate that targeted training can enhance parents' knowledge and communication skills, enabling them to discuss puberty, bodily changes, and protective behaviours without excessive embarrassment or fear of stimulating curiosity. Similarly, teacher-focused interventions have shown promise in equipping educators with culturally sensitive pedagogical strategies, curricular materials, and confidence to integrate sexuality topics into classroom instruction (Choirina & Nai'mah, 2024; Hendriks et al., 2024; Chamidah et al., 2024). International studies echo these findings, showing that teacher and health-worker training is crucial for implementing inclusive and effective sexual education in diverse contexts, including students with disabilities and other marginalised groups (Jämiä et al., 2025; Stair et al., 2024; Estruch-García et al., 2025). Yet, despite these advances, most interventions remain designed for formal educational settings and may not fully address the everyday familial and communal dynamics that structure sexuality communication in indigenous societies.

Overall, the existing literature on sexual education in culture-based communities converges on several recurring solutions: integrating local moral values into educational content, strengthening parental involvement, and developing communication training for both parents and teachers (Awaru, 2020; Yumna & Nurani, 2023; Islami et al., 2022; Choirina & Nai'mah, 2024; Herlina et al., 2025). These approaches have been shown to increase community acceptance and enhance intergenerational dialogue about reproductive health, puberty, and self-protection. However, they have been rarely examined in indigenous communities that possess highly distinctive belief systems, ritual hierarchies, and kinship-based authority structures such as the Tolotang. At the same time, broader scholarship on the Tolotang community has focused primarily on religious resilience, political behaviour, ritual practices, settlement patterns, and health beliefs, without addressing sexual education as a specific field of inquiry (Jubba et al., 2019, 2023; Juhannis et al., 2021; Satrianegara et al., 2021; Mashuri et al., 2022; Maidin et al., 2023; Suryaningsi, 2023; Ekasari et al., 2024; Tahara et al., 2023; Hadawiah et al., 2025). This combination of thematic focus and neglect indicates a clear research gap concerning how Tolotang cultural values and social structures shape the meaning, practices, and barriers of sexual education.

This study thus offers novelty by examining sexual education specifically within the Tolotang indigenous community, a group whose belief system, social organisation, and traditional leadership differ significantly from the broader Bugis population and have not previously been the primary focus of sexuality education research. Rather than treating culture as a static

background, the study conceptualises Tolotang values, local belief systems, and authoritative relationships with customary leaders as dynamic forces that inform parental interpretations, everyday practices, and perceived constraints related to sexual education. Building on prior work on culture-based sexuality education and culturally responsive research in cross-cultural settings (Awaru, 2020; Liamputtong, 2022; Pasque & Alexander, 2022; Langmia et al., 2024), the scope of this research covers parents' interpretations of sexual education, the forms of sexual education practised in daily family life and community interactions, and the obstacles encountered in these processes, including those arising from cultural norms, limited knowledge, and contemporary social changes.

Accordingly, this study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of how sexual education is perceived, enacted, and negotiated within the Tolotang indigenous community by examining the roles of parents, cultural values, and local social dynamics in shaping the educational process. Specifically, the research seeks to answer the following questions: (1) How do Tolotang parents interpret sexual education in the context of their culture and traditions? (2) What forms of sexual education are applied within Tolotang families and community settings? and (3) What obstacles arise in the implementation of sexual education, whether rooted in cultural norms, knowledge limitations, or broader socio-cultural transformations? By addressing these questions, the study is expected to generate a nuanced, context-sensitive account of culture-based sexual education practices in the Tolotang community and to provide an empirical foundation for designing more contextually appropriate and practically applicable sexual education models for indigenous and minority groups in Indonesia and beyond.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sexual education has been widely recognized as a key determinant of adolescents' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours related to their bodies, reproductive health, and interpersonal relationships. Comprehensive programmes are associated with improved decision-making, delayed sexual debut, and reduced risk of sexual violence and unintended pregnancy (Indrawati et al., 2024; Nisrin et al., 2024). Empirical studies consistently show that when sexual education integrates cognitive, emotional, and behavioural components, adolescents develop clearer personal boundaries, stronger refusal skills, and greater awareness of the psychosocial consequences of unsafe sexual practices (Heril et al., 2022; Munawaroh, 2023; Nisrin et al., 2024). At the same time, research highlights substantial disparities in access and quality of sexual education across social groups, with young people in rural, traditional, and indigenous contexts

often receiving fragmented or inaccurate information compared with their urban counterparts (Ramadhani, 2023; Rohman et al., 2023).

The family remains the primary site for early sexual socialisation, yet many parents feel unprepared or uncomfortable to talk explicitly about sexuality, puberty, and reproductive health. Several studies show that communication within families tends to be indirect, moralistic, and dominated by prohibitions rather than open dialogue, which limits children's opportunities to ask questions or clarify misconceptions (Triani, 2020; Islami et al., 2022; Rohman et al., 2023). In traditional communities, conversations about the body and sexuality are often framed as taboo, potentially sinful, or shameful, reinforcing silence around topics such as menstruation, nocturnal emissions, and sexual consent (Heril et al., 2022; Wihdania et al., 2020; Sholahudin, 2019). This pattern is associated with low levels of factual knowledge, reliance on peers and media as main sources of information, and heightened vulnerability to harassment, early marriage, and unwanted pregnancy (Ramadhani, 2023; Rohman et al., 2023; Munawaroh, 2023).

In response to these challenges, a growing body of literature stresses the importance of culturally grounded sexual education that aligns biomedical information with locally meaningful values and norms. Studies in various Indonesian cultural contexts demonstrate that interventions are more acceptable when sexuality is framed through existing concepts of morality, shame, mutual respect, and social harmony (Awaru, 2020; Yumna & Nurani, 2023; Wihdania et al., 2020). In Bugis communities, for example, sexuality is closely linked to *siri'* (shame/honour) and *pesse* (empathy), and sexual education becomes more effective when presented as part of character and moral education rather than as an explicit biological discourse (Awaru, 2020). Similar findings in other indigenous groups show that embedding messages about bodily autonomy, modesty, and mutual respect within local cultural narratives encourages parental engagement and reduces resistance to sexual education programmes (Sholahudin, 2019; Heril et al., 2022; Yumna & Nurani, 2023).

At the same time, research indicates that parents and educators frequently lack the skills and resources needed to translate cultural values into age-appropriate, developmentally informed sexual education. Training programmes for parents have been shown to improve their confidence in naming body parts, discussing puberty, and teaching children about consent and self-protection, while reducing feelings of embarrassment and fear of "stimulating curiosity" (Islami et al., 2022; Munawaroh, 2023). Teacher training has also been identified as a critical factor in integrating culturally sensitive sexual education into school curricula, particularly in contexts where teachers themselves come from conservative backgrounds and are unsure how to balance religious-cultural norms with health information (Choirina & Nai'mah, 2024; Indrawati et al., 2024).

Overall, these studies point to the need for integrative models that combine family-based, school-based, and community-based efforts to strengthen children's protection and autonomy (Indrawati et al., 2024; Nisrin et al., 2024; Islami et al., 2022).

The Tolotang (Towani Tolotang) community in South Sulawesi represents a distinctive indigenous group whose belief system, kinship organisation, and ritual life offer a unique context for examining culture-based sexual education. Previous studies portray the Tolotang as a religious and cultural minority that has maintained its traditions through processes of resilience, syncretism, and negotiation with state and religious authorities (Tahara et al., 2023; Shuhufi et al., 2020; Jubba et al., 2019, 2023). Research on Tolotang sociocultural life highlights the centrality of kinship networks, ritual practices, and communal gatherings in sustaining identity and regulating everyday behaviour, including norms related to health, gender relations, and intergenerational authority (Mashuri et al., 2022; Juhannis et al., 2021; Satrianegara et al., 2021). Studies on cigarettes, betel leaves, and areca nut practices, traditional games such as *massempek*, and infant-care customs further illustrate how embodied practices and intergenerational rituals function as vehicles for value transmission within the community (Maidin et al., 2023; Suryaningsti, 2023; Ekasari et al., 2024).

More recent scholarship positions the Tolotang within broader discussions on local wisdom, minority–majority relations, and digital transformation. Analyses of political behaviour and *fiqh al-‘aqliyyāt* show how the community navigates its minority status while preserving core beliefs and normative systems (Jubba et al., 2023; Jubba et al., 2019). Studies of cross-religious ritual communication and women's leadership (*uwa/uwatta*) reveal that Tolotang social life is characterised by dense relational networks in which symbolic authority and gendered roles are negotiated in ritual arenas (Hadawiah et al., 2025; Darmayani et al., 2024). At the same time, research on public service delivery and local wisdom in indigenous communities suggests that digital transformation and state programmes increasingly intersect with customary structures, creating new opportunities and tensions in domains such as education, health, and social protection (Jabbar et al., 2026). Collectively, this literature underscores that Tolotang socialisation processes— including those related to body, gender, and morality—are deeply embedded in ritualised, communal, and value-laden practices (Sugiarti, 2020; Tahara et al., 2023; Maidin et al., 2023).

Theoretically, the dynamics of sexual education in such a community can be illuminated through Social Construction Theory, particularly the work of Berger and Luckmann as interpreted in Indonesian scholarship. Social reality is understood as a product of continuous processes of externalisation, objectification, and internalisation, in which meanings are produced through

interaction, institutionalised as taken-for-granted norms, and then incorporated into individual consciousness (Dharma, 2018; Hidayaturrehman, 2020). Applied to sexuality, this perspective emphasises that what is considered “proper”, “shameful”, or “taboo” is not natural or fixed, but historically and culturally constituted through language, ritual, and everyday practice. In many traditional communities, values such as *siri'* (shame/honour), politeness, and respect for family reputation are repeatedly externalised through advice, prohibitions, and exemplary behaviour, and then objectified as collective moral truths that regulate interaction between men and women (Awaru, 2020; Wihdania et al., 2020; Sholahudin, 2019). Children internalise these norms as part of their self-identity, shaping how they interpret bodily changes, relationships, and risks associated with sexuality (Dharma, 2018; Hidayaturrehman, 2020).

Within this theoretical and empirical landscape, culture-based sexual education models have been proposed as promising solutions to bridge gaps between traditional norms and contemporary health needs. In Bugis and Minangkabau contexts, integrating local concepts such as *siri'*, *pesse*, and *adat*-based gender expectations into structured educational messages has been shown to enhance community acceptance and foster more open parent–child communication about puberty, reproductive health, and self-protection (Awaru, 2020; Yumna & Nurani, 2023). Studies in schools demonstrate that when teachers receive training that combines scientific content with culturally resonant narratives, they are better able to negotiate sensitive topics and reduce resistance from parents and community actors (Choirina & Nai'mah, 2024; Indrawati et al., 2024). Parallel research on parent training confirms that equipping parents with communication strategies that respect local norms while gradually introducing anatomical and psychosocial information can strengthen children's capacity to recognise and report inappropriate behaviour (Islami et al., 2022; Munawaroh, 2023; Triani, 2020).

Despite the richness of this literature, several critical gaps remain. First, most empirical work on sexual education in Indonesia focuses on general school-based programmes or on families in majority religious communities, with indigenous and local-belief groups receiving much less attention (Indrawati et al., 2024; Nisrin et al., 2024; Ramadhani, 2023). Second, studies on the Tolotang community have predominantly examined issues of religion, political behaviour, ritual, spatial organisation, health beliefs, and minority rights, rather than the specific domain of sexual education for children and adolescents (Tahara et al., 2023; Jubba et al., 2019, 2023; Mashuri et al., 2022; Juhannis et al., 2021; Suryaningsi, 2023; Ekasari et al., 2024; Satrianegara et al., 2021; Shuhufi et al., 2020; Jabbar et al., 2026; Hadawiah et al., 2025; Darmayani et al., 2024). Third, although culture-based models and social-constructionist perspectives have been widely discussed, there is still limited empirical mapping of how *siri'*, customary authority, and

intergenerational relations concretely shape parents' interpretations, practices, and perceived barriers in delivering sexual education within Tolotang families (Awaru, 2020; Wihdania et al., 2020; Sholahudin, 2019; Heril et al., 2022).

Addressing these gaps requires in-depth qualitative inquiry that situates parents' and adolescents' experiences within the specific socio-cultural configuration of the Tolotang community. By linking Social Construction Theory with empirical data on parental interpretations, everyday practices, and structural obstacles, the present study seeks to extend previous research on culture-based sexual education, move beyond general descriptions of Tolotang religiosity and ritual life, and contribute a nuanced understanding of how sexual education is constructed, negotiated, and constrained in an indigenous belief community.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design and Approach

This study employed a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach to explore in depth the meanings, perceptions, and lived experiences of parents and members of the Tolotang indigenous community regarding sexual education. A phenomenological design is appropriate when the research focus is on how individuals interpret and give meaning to their everyday experiences within specific socio-cultural contexts (Kayyali, 2025; Liamputtong, 2022; Mueller et al., 2024; Pasque & Alexander, 2022). By foregrounding participants' subjective perspectives, this approach enables a nuanced understanding of how sexual education is socially constructed, negotiated, and constrained in an indigenous belief community (Brennen, 2021; Dunk-West & Saxton, 2024; Langmia et al., 2024). The chosen design is thus aligned with the research problem, which centres on the implicit, culturally embedded nature of sexual education practices among the Tolotang.

Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted in the Tolotang indigenous community in Sidrap Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, a setting characterised by strong customary authority, dense kinship networks, and distinctive belief systems (Jubba et al., 2019, 2023; Tahara et al., 2023; Maidin et al., 2023). The primary participants consisted of Tolotang parents who had children aged 5–22 years and Tolotang adolescents and young adults aged 17–22 years. Participants were recruited through purposive sampling, based on the relevance of their knowledge and involvement in sexual education practices within families and the community. Purposive sampling is widely used in qualitative research to ensure that information-rich cases are selected to illuminate central phenomena in depth (McBeath & Bager-Charleson, 2020; Servaes, 2020; Khan, 2022; Throne,

2024). In total, 10 informants were included, representing both generations to capture intergenerational perspectives on the meaning and practice of sexual education. The inclusion criteria focused on: (a) being a member of the Tolotang community; (b) for parents, having at least one child aged 5–22 years; and (c) for adolescents/young adults, being aged 17–22 years and willing to discuss their experiences of receiving sexual education.

Research Procedures

The research implementation followed several structured stages designed to ensure systematic and ethical conduct of the study (Forward & Levin, 2021; Langmia et al., 2024). First, a preparatory stage involved reviewing relevant literature, developing semi-structured interview guides, identifying potential informants in collaboration with local gatekeepers, and obtaining research permissions from local authorities and institutional review bodies. Second, the fieldwork stage consisted of establishing rapport, conducting in-depth interviews, engaging in participatory observation, and collecting relevant documents. Third, a post-fieldwork stage was devoted to transcription, data management, iterative analysis, and validation of findings with participants and academic peers. Such staged procedures are consistent with best practices in qualitative research, enabling iterative refinement of data collection and analysis in response to emerging insights (McBeath & Bager-Charleson, 2020; Court & Abbas, 2022; Cohenmiller, 2023).

Materials and Research Instruments

In line with qualitative traditions, the primary research instrument was the researcher, whose reflexivity, sensitivity to context, and interpretive skills are central to the quality of the findings (Brennen, 2021; Kara & Khoo, 2021; Cohenmiller, 2023). To support systematic data collection, several auxiliary instruments were employed: semi-structured interview guides tailored for parents and adolescents; observation sheets for recording contextual information, non-verbal cues, and interaction patterns; and documentation checklists to guide the collection of relevant written and visual materials. Interviews were audio-recorded using digital devices, and fieldnotes were taken contemporaneously to capture impressions, contextual details, and emerging analytical ideas (Edwards & Holland, 2023; Minh, 2024; Elhami et al., 2024). Photographic documentation of public spaces and community activities was collected where appropriate and ethically permissible, following guidelines for visual methods in qualitative research (Heinrich et al., 2024; Creamer, 2024).

Data Collection Techniques

Data were gathered using three complementary techniques: in-depth semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews allowed participants to narrate their understandings, experiences, and reflections on sexual education in their own words, while providing the flexibility to probe emerging themes (Edwards & Holland, 2023; Elhamma, 2024; Elhami et al., 2024). Interviews with parents explored their interpretations of sexual education, the forms and content of guidance provided to children, and perceived obstacles in discussing sexuality. Interviews with adolescents focused on their experiences of receiving sexual education from parents, peers, schools, and other sources, as well as their perceptions of cultural norms. Participatory observation was conducted during community gatherings, informal interactions, and everyday family activities to observe how values related to body, shame, and gender relations were communicated in practice (Elhamma, 2024; Roshan & Elhami, 2024). Documentation included community regulations, local educational materials (if any), and notes from ritual or communal events relevant to socialisation processes. The use of multiple data sources is consistent with recommendations for enhancing the depth and breadth of qualitative inquiry (Servaes, 2020; Langmia et al., 2024; Liamputtong, 2022).

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis followed the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman, which comprises three interrelated activities: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. First, data condensation was carried out by transcribing interviews verbatim, reading and re-reading transcripts and fieldnotes, and coding meaningful units related to the meanings, practices, and barriers of sexual education in the Tolotang context. Codes were then clustered into categories and themes that captured patterns across participants and data sources (Mihas, 2022; Ivánkova, 2022; Throne, 2024). Second, data display involved organising themes into matrices, diagrams, and analytic memos to facilitate comparison across participant groups and to visualise relationships between cultural values, parental practices, and perceived obstacles (Creamer, 2024; Carling, 2024). Third, conclusion drawing and verification were conducted iteratively by refining thematic interpretations, checking for negative cases, and returning to the data to test emerging explanations. This iterative, cyclical process aligns with established qualitative and phenomenological analytic practices aimed at developing credible and conceptually robust interpretations (Forward & Levin, 2021; Liamputtong, 2022; Dunk-West & Saxton, 2024).

Trustworthiness and Data Validity

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study applied criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability commonly used in qualitative research (Court & Abbas, 2022; Kamyra, 2022; Borcsa & Willig, 2021). Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement in the field, triangulation of data sources (parents, adolescents, observations, documents), and member checking, whereby preliminary interpretations were discussed with selected participants to verify resonance with their experiences (Liamputtong, 2022; Langmia et al., 2024). Transferability was supported by providing thick descriptions of the research context, participants, and cultural setting, enabling readers to assess the applicability of findings to other contexts (Pasque, 2025; Dunk-West & Saxton, 2024). Dependability was addressed by maintaining an audit trail documenting decisions made during data collection and analysis, including changes to interview guides and coding schemes (Throne, 2024; Kamyra, 2022). Confirmability was promoted through reflexive journaling and peer debriefing with academic supervisors, ensuring that interpretations were grounded in the data rather than in researcher preconceptions (Kara & Khoo, 2021; Cohenmiller, 2023; Borcsa & Willig, 2021).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the relevant institutional ethics committee, and permissions were secured from local community leaders prior to data collection. All participants were informed about the purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits of the study, and written or verbal informed consent was obtained in accordance with community norms and institutional guidelines (Liamputtong, 2022; Langmia et al., 2024). Pseudonyms were used in all transcripts and reports, and identifying details were modified or omitted to protect participants' confidentiality, particularly given the sensitivity of sexuality and the small size of the Tolotang community (Kara & Khoo, 2021; Kamyra, 2022). Participants were reminded of their right to decline answering any question or to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. Special attention was paid to minimising discomfort when discussing intimate topics, including the use of same-gender interviewers where possible and creating a private, safe environment for interviews (Borcsa & Willig, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2024). Through these procedures, the research design and implementation were aligned with ethical standards for qualitative research on sensitive topics in cross-cultural and indigenous settings.

RESULT

Overview of the Fieldwork

The study was conducted from September to October 2024 in Sidenreng Rappang Regency (Sidrap), South Sulawesi, focusing on the Tolotang indigenous community. Eleven participants were involved, comprising traditional leaders, community leaders, parents, and adolescents from Tolotang families. The analysis centres on the practice, interpretation, and intergenerational transmission of values related to sexual education within Tolotang culture. Data were generated through in-depth interviews with purposively selected informants, complemented by participatory observation and documentation of everyday interactions and communal activities.

Table 1. Overview of Research Participants

Participant group	Number	Main characteristics
Traditional leaders	2	Male/female, senior ritual authority, long-term community role
Community leaders	2	Respected figures in neighbourhood and social activities
Parents (Tolotang)	4	Mothers and fathers with children aged 5–22 years
Adolescents/young adults	3	Tolotang youth aged 17–22 years
Total	11	

The findings are organised into three major themes: (1) parental interpretations of sexual education; (2) forms of sexual education practised in families and the community; and (3) obstacles to the implementation of sexual education within the Tolotang context. Figure 1 presents a concept map that synthesises the relationships among these themes.

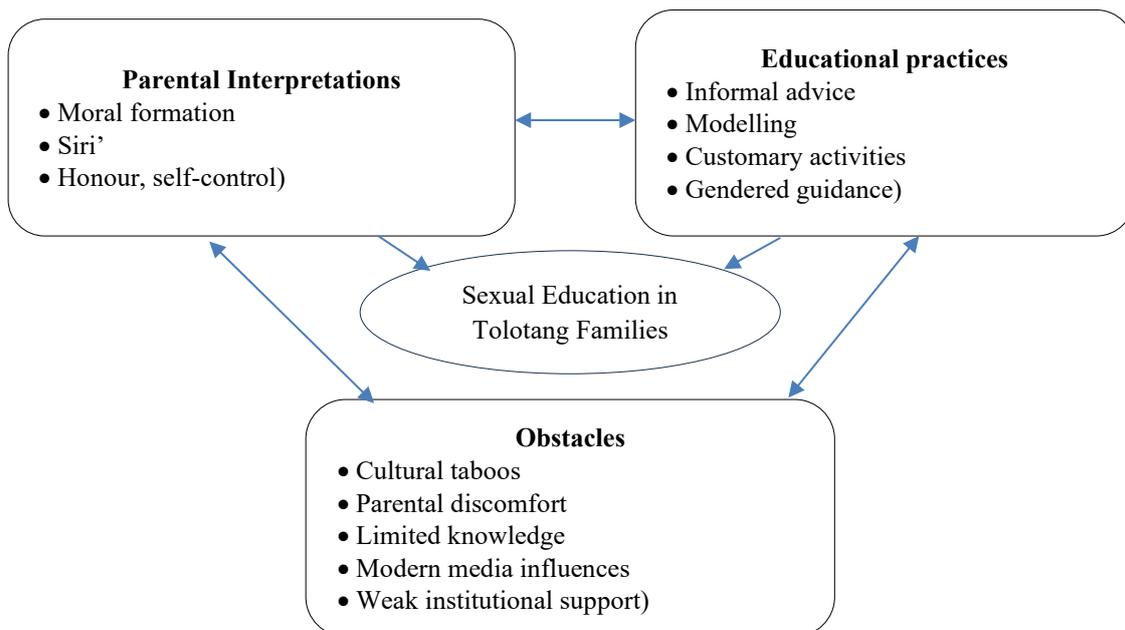


Figure 1. Concept Map of Sexual Education in the Tolotang Community

The figure positions “Sexual Education in Tolotang Families” at the centre, linked to three main thematic domains: (a) *Parental Interpretations* (moral formation, siri’, honour, self-control); (b) *Educational Practices* (informal advice, modelling, customary activities, gendered guidance); and (c) *Obstacles* (cultural taboos, parental discomfort, limited knowledge, modern media influences, weak institutional support). Arrows indicate bidirectional relationships, illustrating how cultural norms shape parental interpretations and practices, while simultaneously constraining and being challenged by social change and digital information.

Parental Interpretations of Sexual Education in Tolotang Families

The findings indicate that parents in Tolotang families do not understand sexual education as teaching adult sexual behaviour, but as an effort to protect children and to shape their morals and character. Sexual education is defined as a process through which children learn to recognise their bodies, become aware of personal boundaries, and acquire the capacity to protect themselves from inappropriate acts. This meaning arises against the backdrop of parents’ growing concern about the prevalence of sexual violence and exposure to sexual content experienced by children and adolescents in contemporary society (compare Utami et al., 2024; Fatemi et al., 2024; Haruna et al., 2025).

Parents emphasise the importance of introducing children to personal body parts, teaching vigilance regarding unnatural or unwanted touch, and encouraging the courage to refuse and report experiences that threaten their bodily or psychological integrity. In this sense, sexual education is not confined to the biological dimension but is closely associated with manners, shame, self-respect, and family dignity. It is framed as part of character education aimed at cultivating self-control and moral responsibility, with a particular emphasis on girls’ vulnerability and the need to guard their honour.

Tolotang cultural values and norms strongly influence how parents understand and communicate sexual education. The community upholds politeness, shame (*siri’*), and self-respect, so sexuality is considered a sensitive topic. Consequently, sexual education is rarely delivered openly and explicitly; instead, it takes the form of advice, prohibitions, and the internalisation of customary norms transmitted across generations. Sexuality is tightly bound to family honour, and violations of sexual norms are perceived as social disgrace that tarnishes the good name of both family and community (Wihdania et al., 2020; Sholahudin, 2019; Heril et al., 2022; Awaru, 2020).

In practice, sexual education also reflects gendered constructions of roles. Girls are more strongly directed towards maintaining self-respect and modesty, personal hygiene, and prudence

in their relationships. Boys are emphasised to develop self-control, responsibility, and respect for women. Despite these different emphases, the overarching parental goal remains to equip children with culturally congruent understandings and attitudes that enable them to protect themselves and behave appropriately in social life. Adolescents themselves describe sexual education as a necessary resource for building self-awareness, responsibility, and insight into the social and psychological consequences of unhealthy sexual behaviour, indicating substantial alignment between parental and youth perspectives even when information remains partial or indirect.

These patterns can be interpreted through Social Construction Theory, particularly Berger and Luckmann's conceptualisation of social reality as produced through processes of externalisation, objectification, and internalisation (Dharma, 2018; Hidayaturrehman, 2020). Parents act as primary agents of socialisation who externalise cultural values such as *siri*, modesty, and moral responsibility via advice, prohibitions, and daily modelling. These values become objectified as "natural" social norms that children perceive as unquestionable. Through internalisation, they then form part of children's self-understanding and shape their interpretations of the body, sexuality, and social relationships.

Forms of Sexual Education Practised in the Tolotang Community

Sexual education in the Tolotang community is not organised as a formal curriculum or structured learning programme but unfolds informally through the family, social environment, and customary practices embedded in daily life. It is better understood as part of the broader process of socialising values and building children's character rather than as the transmission of technical medical or biological knowledge (Awaru, 2020; Yumna & Nurani, 2023). Sexual education thus functions simultaneously as a mechanism of self-protection and as an instrument for strengthening moral and cultural values.

The content of sexual education focuses on basic understanding of the body, personal boundaries, and control of social behaviour. Children are taught to recognise intimate body parts and to understand the body as something valuable that must be cared for and protected. Prohibitions against inappropriate touch are emphasised and accompanied by messages that children have the right to refuse behaviour that makes them uncomfortable and are obliged to report such incidents to parents or trusted family members. This cultivation of courage is regarded as an important early form of protection against sexual violence, echoing child-centred prevention models discussed in other contexts (Apaydin Cirik & Karakurt, 2024; Le et al., 2024; Sarman & Tuncay, 2025).

In addition, sexual education includes bodily hygiene and self-care, particularly at puberty. Girls receive explanations about menstrual hygiene and the management of bodily changes, while boys are directed to maintain cleanliness and to understand physical changes as a natural process of growing into adulthood. Explanations are delivered simply, gradually, and contextually so that children do not feel afraid, awkward, or ashamed of their own bodies. These messages are intertwined with moral and customary values, such as *siri*, politeness, and self-respect, and with guidance on keeping relationships between boys and girls within culturally acceptable limits. Children are reminded that their behaviour not only reflects on themselves but also carries the reputation of their families and the community.

The methods used to convey sexual education are predominantly indirect, gradual, and situational. Parents seldom provide explicit or formal explanations; rather, they communicate through everyday advice, casual conversation, and subtle reprimands tailored to particular situations. Teaching moments typically occur when children ask questions, experience physical changes, or when parents respond to social events in the community (e.g., gossip about premarital relationships or cases of harassment). The language used tends to be gentle, symbolic, and simple, in order to ensure that messages are accepted without causing discomfort or perceived impropriety.

Beyond verbal communication, habituation and modelling are central. Children learn about bodily boundaries and social etiquette by observing how parents and other adults dress, speak, and interact with the opposite sex. Patterns of physical distance, tone of voice, and gender-segregated spaces serve as tacit cues about acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. This exemplary method reinforces sexual education messages without requiring explicit discourse, resonating with findings from other culture-based settings where modelling and implicit communication predominate (Bonilla-Algovia et al., 2024; Pitsoane et al., 2024; Salisu et al., 2024).

Sexual education also takes place collectively through children's involvement in traditional activities and community life. Although there are no specific rituals that address sexuality directly, behavioural expectations—such as modest dress, respectful speech, and avoidance of excessive intimacy—are reinforced through guidance from traditional leaders, family meetings, communal labour activities, and various customary events (Satrianegara et al., 2021; Maidin et al., 2023; Suryaningsi, 2023; Ekasari et al., 2024). Through this process, sexual education is woven into a continuum of socialisation about what it means to be a “good” Tolotang person, so that norms regarding gender relations and bodily conduct become part of the broader moral universe of the community.

These practices can again be understood through Social Construction Theory. Sexual education emerges as a social reality produced through continuous interaction and cultural transmission, where values such as *siri*, politeness, and self-respect are externalised by parents, customary leaders, and the wider community, objectified as communal truths, and internalised by children as personal moral guidelines (Dharma, 2018; Hidayaturrahman, 2020). Rather than a discrete instructional activity, sexual education becomes a normative, collective construct that shapes how children understand their bodies, sexuality, gender roles, and social relationships.

Obstacles to the Implementation of Sexual Education in the Tolotang Community

The implementation of sexual education in the Tolotang community faces multiple, interrelated cultural, psychological, social, and structural obstacles. These barriers contribute to a pattern of sexual education that is limited, indirect, and highly dependent on prevailing customary values.

The most prominent obstacle arises from the powerful influence of Tolotang culture and customs, particularly the value of *siri*, which encompasses shame, self-respect, and family honour. This value functions as a moral foundation regulating speech, behaviour, and interaction in social life, including discussions of sexuality. Sexuality is perceived as a private and sensitive domain, such that any discussion must be conducted cautiously, not openly, and in highly polite terms. As a result, sexual education is rarely conveyed explicitly, but mainly through prohibitions, moral advice, and the reinforcement of customary norms. Children's understandings of the body, biological changes, and gender relations thus develop implicitly and not always systematically, similar to patterns described in other conservative and religious communities (Flanagan, 2024; Fatemi et al., 2024; Vogler, 2026).

Psychological and social factors further constrain parental communication. Many parents report feeling awkward, embarrassed, doubtful, and afraid of making mistakes when talking about sexuality with their children. These feelings are grounded in their own upbringing, during which sexual topics were seldom discussed in the family. The absence of prior experience and communication models leaves parents without clear guidelines on how to deliver age-appropriate sexual education. They also worry that talking about sexuality might trigger "excessive curiosity" in children, prompting some to restrict information to what they perceive as morally safe topics. Social pressures—such as fear of being judged as violating customs or of attracting negative community perceptions—reinforce parental reluctance to engage in open sexual communication (Faize et al., 2024; Bonilla-Algovia et al., 2024; Haruna et al., 2025).

Another key obstacle concerns limited formal education and access to reliable information among parents. Most have never received structured training on sexual education aligned with children's developmental stages. Their knowledge is drawn primarily from intergenerational value transmission, personal experience, and normative customary advice. Consequently, sexual education in the family tends to emphasise moral control and behavioural regulation, while comprehensive understanding of bodily changes, reproductive health, and the psychosocial impacts of sexual behaviour remains underdeveloped. This finding parallels broader evidence that parents worldwide often lack the resources and confidence to serve as effective sexuality educators without targeted support (Gutu et al., 2025; Sarman & Tuncay, 2025; Gergely & Rusu, 2025).

The rapid spread of digital media and modern information flows adds further complexity. Sexual content is easily accessible via smartphones and social media, enabling children and adolescents to encounter explicit material that conflicts with Tolotang norms of modesty and implied conversation. Parents are caught in a dilemma between attempting to filter external information and providing adequate explanations to children. On the one hand, they recognise the potential role of schools and health services as more systematic sources of information; on the other, they fear that explicit educational materials may contradict *siri*'-based values and encourage undesirable social freedoms (Utami et al., 2024; Khosla & Tzortziou-Brown, 2025; Poblete-Inostroza, 2024). As a result, community acceptance of school-based sexual education is conditional, with preference for content framed around health, hygiene, and self-protection rather than explicit sexual detail.

From a social constructionist perspective, these obstacles reflect how traditional values such as *siri* have undergone objectification and become entrenched social structures that regulate what can and cannot be said about sexuality (Dharma, 2018; Hidayaturrahman, 2020). These values are externalised across generations through language, behaviour, and normative systems, thereby restricting open conversation and encouraging indirect, symbolic, and moralistic communication. At the same time, access to formal education, digital media, and modern health information has introduced new interpretive frames that challenge existing norms. Younger generations increasingly internalise knowledge from outside the community, while parents attempt to adapt without abandoning traditional values. This dialectical process between tradition and modernity illustrates ongoing social negotiation in the construction of new realities around sexual education in the Tolotang community, and underscores the need for culturally responsive models that can bridge, rather than erase, these normative worlds (Awaru, 2020; Yumna & Nurani, 2023; Herlina et al., 2025; Jabbar et al., 2026).

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that sexual education in the Tolotang indigenous community is constructed primarily as moral and character formation rather than as a scientific explanation of sexuality and reproduction. This pattern is consistent with Social Construction Theory, which views social reality as produced through processes of externalisation, objectification, and internalisation of meaning in everyday interactions (Dharma, 2018; Hidayaturrehman, 2020). Parents, traditional leaders, and community figures externalise values such as *siri* (shame/honour), modesty, and family dignity through advice, prohibitions, and exemplary behaviour. Over time, these values are objectified as unquestioned social norms that regulate gender relations and bodily conduct, and are internalised by children as part of their self-identity. In this framework, sexual education is not a discrete school subject but a culturally embedded process aimed at preserving social order and honour.

The strong linkage between sexuality and family honour found in this study parallels findings in other traditional and religious communities where sexuality is framed as a moral domain, tightly controlled to protect social reputation and prevent perceived moral decay (Heril et al., 2022; Flanagan, 2024; Fatemi et al., 2024). As in many conservative settings, Tolotang parents consider explicit discussions of sexual topics to be potentially dangerous, fearing they may stimulate curiosity or encourage inappropriate behaviour. This leads to indirect, euphemistic, and highly selective communication, with an emphasis on prohibitions and modesty rather than on anatomical knowledge, consent, or reproductive health (Wihdania et al., 2020; Ramadhani, 2023; Rohman et al., 2023; Bonilla-Algovia et al., 2024). International evidence suggests that such moralistic, prohibition-centred communication leaves young people vulnerable to misinformation, risky sexual practices, and sexual violence, because it does not equip them with concrete skills in self-protection and decision-making (Utami et al., 2024; Tarver et al., 2026; Kearns & DiRienzo, 2024).

At the same time, the study shows that Tolotang parents are not indifferent to children's safety. On the contrary, they conceptualise sexual education as an effort to protect children from inappropriate touch, harassment, and reputational harm. This aligns with research indicating that parents across diverse cultures recognise the importance of sexual education but often lack confidence, language, and pedagogical strategies to address it effectively (Islami et al., 2022; Faize et al., 2024; Gutu et al., 2025). The emphasis on teaching children to recognise "personal parts", avoid suspicious touch, and report uncomfortable experiences resonates with child-centred prevention programmes that seek to build children's capacity to disclose abuse (Apaydin Cirik & Karakurt, 2024; Le et al., 2024). However, without a broader framework that includes consent,

emotional aspects, and gender equity, this protection tends to be asymmetrically placed on girls, reinforcing gendered expectations and surveillance while under-addressing boys' responsibilities and vulnerabilities.

The results also highlight that sexual education in Tolotang families is delivered primarily through informal communication, situational advice, modelling, and participation in customary activities. This confirms earlier Indonesian studies which found that in many communities, sexuality-related values are communicated indirectly through everyday practices, local concepts of honour and shame, and the expectations associated with being a “good” child in the eyes of the family and community (Awaru, 2020; Yumna & Nurani, 2023; Heril et al., 2022). The central role of *siri*’ and the integration of sexual norms into broader moral and social scripts are typical of culture-based education processes in which the boundaries between “sexual education” and “character education” are blurred. Internationally, research on informal and community-based sexual education likewise emphasises that youth often learn more from family and peers than from formal curricula, especially in contexts with limited or contested school-based programmes (Diede & Holland, 2025; Scull et al., 2025; Duran-Mestre & Vives-Barceló, 2025).

Compared to school-based comprehensive sexuality education models, which seek to provide structured, age-appropriate information and skills (Berglas et al., 2025; Maradiya et al., 2026; Utami et al., 2024), the Tolotang case demonstrates both strengths and limitations of culturally embedded informal education. On the one hand, the strong internalisation of cultural values such as mutual respect, modesty, and responsibility can support protective behaviours, including avoidance of risky situations and awareness of the social consequences of transgressions. On the other hand, the lack of explicit discussion about anatomy, consent, contraception, and sexual rights means that young people may be ill-equipped to navigate complex sexual situations, especially in an era of widespread digital exposure (Gutiérrez-García, 2024; Colom et al., 2024; Ford et al., 2024). This tension between cultural preservation and health needs mirrors debates elsewhere about how to reconcile comprehensive sexuality education with religious and cultural norms (Poblete-Inostroza, 2024; Khosla & Tzortziou-Brown, 2025; Moreno Rojas et al., 2025).

The study’s findings on obstacles—cultural taboos, parental discomfort, limited knowledge, and the disruptive influence of digital media—are also consistent with broader evidence. Parents’ feelings of shame, awkwardness, and fear of “saying the wrong thing” echo patterns reported in Pakistan, Iran, Ghana, and other contexts, where adults have rarely received sexual education themselves and thus have few models for open, age-appropriate communication (Fatemi et al., 2024; Faize et al., 2024; Haruna et al., 2025; Salisu et al., 2024). Concerns that

talking about sexuality will increase curiosity often lead to withholding information, which paradoxically pushes youth to seek answers from peers, pornography, and social media (Gutiérrez-García, 2024; Colom et al., 2024; Zhang & Zou, 2025). This dynamic is clearly visible in Tolotang families, where parents recognise the risks posed by modern media but feel unsure how to respond beyond reinforcing prohibitions and moral warnings.

The present study therefore supports international research showing that parent-based interventions can significantly improve parent–child communication and adolescent sexual health outcomes when they provide concrete communication strategies, culturally adapted messages, and reassurance that talking about sexuality does not necessarily promote risky behaviour (Islami et al., 2022; Gutu et al., 2025; Sarman & Tuncay, 2025; Kayabaşı & Sari, 2025). It also aligns with evidence that teacher training and community engagement are crucial for implementing sexuality education in conservative settings, where teachers and health workers face pressures similar to those experienced by parents (Indrawati et al., 2024; Hendriks et al., 2024; Stair et al., 2024; Chamidah et al., 2024).

This study argues that sexual education in the Tolotang community can neither be reduced to an absence of education nor idealised as entirely protective. Rather, it is a complex, socially constructed reality characterised by strong moral underpinnings, implicit communication, and gendered expectations, operating within a rapidly changing informational environment. Our position is that Tolotang cultural values—especially *siri*, respect for others, and collective responsibility—constitute a vital resource for sexual education, but one that must be consciously linked with accurate sexual and reproductive health knowledge and with principles of bodily autonomy and consent. Instead of imposing a purely biomedical or rights-based model that ignores local values, we advocate for a culturally responsive model that uses *siri* and customary teachings as entry points for discussing self-protection, respect for partners, and mutual responsibility in relationships, in line with recommendations for culture-based approaches in other indigenous and minority settings (Awaru, 2020; Yumna & Nurani, 2023; Rhadiyah et al., 2025; Herlina et al., 2025).

From these arguments, several recommendations emerge. First, at the family level, parent-focused training programmes are needed to enhance Tolotang parents' knowledge and communication skills while respecting cultural sensitivities. Such programmes could be co-designed with traditional leaders and local health workers to ensure that messages about puberty, bodily autonomy, and sexual violence prevention are framed in familiar moral language but enriched with accurate health information (Islami et al., 2022; Rhadiyah et al., 2025; Salisu et al., 2024). Second, at the community level, customary leaders and respected elders could be involved

as advocates for child protection and as co-facilitators of community dialogues that clarify how Tolotang values can support, rather than hinder, efforts to prevent sexual abuse and early marriage. Experiences from other contexts show that when religious and traditional authorities actively endorse comprehensive and protective sexual education messages, community acceptance increases significantly (Fauzi et al., 2025; Zulkarnain et al., 2025; Herlina et al., 2025).

Third, at the school and health system level, there is a need to develop locally adapted curricula and materials that combine national guidelines on sexuality education with Tolotang cultural references and examples. This could involve collaboration between schools, community organisations, and health services to provide structured content on topics such as puberty, consent, contraception, and digital safety, while maintaining emphasis on respect, modesty, and responsibility (Utami et al., 2024; Belcher et al., 2024; Kauer et al., 2025). Teacher training should explicitly address how to negotiate cultural taboos and parental concerns, and how to communicate in ways that are inclusive of diverse needs, including those of adolescents with disabilities or other vulnerabilities (Estruch-García et al., 2025; Stair & Roach, 2024; Chamidah et al., 2024).

Fourth, given the significant role of digital media, interventions in the Tolotang context should incorporate digital and media literacy components for both youth and parents. Evidence from various settings suggests that media literacy-based sexual health programmes can help young people critically evaluate sexual content, resist harmful stereotypes, and make more informed decisions (Scull et al., 2024; Evans-Paulson et al., 2025; Reeves et al., 2024; Chansiri & Wongwatkit, 2024). In Tolotang communities, this might include guided discussions about online risks, consent in digital interactions, and strategies for safely using smartphones and social media, framed as extensions of *siri*’ and family honour in the digital realm.

Finally, the findings have broader implications for designing sexual education in indigenous communities undergoing digital transformation. As other studies on the Tolotang and similar groups demonstrate, digitalisation is reshaping community life and public service delivery, creating both opportunities and challenges for integrating local wisdom into new forms of communication and education (Jabbar et al., 2026; Tahara et al., 2023; Hadawiah et al., 2025; Darmayani et al., 2024; Ekasari et al., 2024). The present study contributes to this literature by showing that sexual education is a key domain in which such negotiation between tradition and modernity is taking place. We contend that future programmes should not aim merely to “modernise” Tolotang sexual education but to co-construct, with community members, culturally grounded models that protect children and adolescents while affirming the community’s identity

and values. In doing so, sexual education can become a site of cultural resilience and innovation rather than of cultural erosion or conflict.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that sexual education in the Tolotang indigenous community is embedded in a strong cultural mechanism grounded in the internalisation of *siri'* (shame), politeness, and self-respect. Rather than being delivered through explicit instruction or biomedical concepts, sexual education is conveyed implicitly through advice, exemplary behaviour, moral habituation, and everyday family and community interactions. Parents recognise the importance of sexual education, yet their efforts remain constrained by feelings of shame, cultural taboos, and limited knowledge, resulting in unsystematic, situational practices that privilege moral regulation over comprehensive reproductive health information. Structural obstacles—such as the minimal involvement of indigenous leaders, the absence of culturally based guidelines, and the pervasive influence of digital media—create a mismatch between children's developmental needs and parents' capacities to respond.

The key implication is the urgency of developing sexual education approaches that integrate Tolotang cultural values with age-appropriate scientific literacy. Conceptually, the study contributes to the literature by showing how sexual education in a local-belief indigenous group is inseparable from community value structures and identity, and how *siri'* and customary ethics shape parental explanations of the body and social relations. Future research should examine: (1) the specific roles and potential engagement of Tolotang indigenous leaders in sexual education; (2) the design and testing of culturally based sexual education models that integrate scientific knowledge and indigenous values; (3) comparative patterns of culture-based sexual education across indigenous groups in Indonesia; and (4) children's and adolescents' own perspectives on the sexual education they receive, particularly in relation to digital-era risks and opportunities.

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