

Sex Education by Parents to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse: Scoping Review

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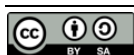
ABSTRACT

Background: Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a global health problem with significant health consequences. Parents have an important role in providing sex education to prevent CSA. The research aims to examine parent's attitudes, barriers, practices in providing sex education to prevent their children from sexual abuse.

Methods: A scoping review research design using database searches from Pubmed, Scopus, Ebsco, SpringerLink, ScienceDirect, and manual searches carried out in 2019-2023, with the search words "parent*" AND "sex education" AND "prevent" OR "intervention" AND "child sexual abuse". This article follows the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) scoping review framework to evaluate the studies

Results: Obtained were 1053 articles, and then filtering was carried out based on inclusion and exclusion criteria and assessment of eligibility to obtain 10 articles that met the requirements. Results show that most parents believe in the importance of sex education for self-protection, though many face barriers such as embarrassment and lack of accurate information. Positive attitudes and open practices are crucial in delivering effective sex education.

Conclusion: Parents play a crucial role in sex education to prevent child sexual abuse. They create a safe environment, teach body awareness, and foster self-confidence.



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INTRODUCTION

Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) is a situation where a child is involved in sexual activities that are not fully understood and cannot give consent (Abdul Latiff, Fang, Goh, & Tan, 2024). Child Sexual Abuse is a global concern that affects many regions and remains prevalent across multiple nations (Aiffah & Religia, 2020). According to data from the Online Women and Children's Protection Information System (SIMFONI PPA), in 2023, there were 18,175 cases of child abuse, with 10,932 of them being sexual abuse cases (Kemenpppa RI, 2023).

Child sexual abuse has detrimental effects on various aspects of the victim's life, including physical, behavioral, emotional, psychological, and social well-being. As a result, the child may experience physical issues such as difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite, headaches, an increased risk of sexually transmitted diseases, and injuries from rape (Widya Keswara, Murti, & Demartoto, 2017). Sexual abuse can also affect a child's behavior in the following ways: feeling angry, ashamed, hypersexual, or avoiding males. If the child exhibits aggressive behavior, they may become easily upset by trivial matters, engage in physical fights, and develop a fear of even minor, unintentional touches (Tenkorang, Amo-Adjei, Kumi-Kyereme, & Kundhi, 2021).

The increase in Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) is a clear indication of the lack of sexual education knowledge among children, children who are not adequately informed about body autonomy and

consent are at a heightened risk of being victimized (Bright, Huq, Patel, Miller, & Finkelhor, 2020). Almost all preschool-aged children are familiar with the terms for non-genital organs, but only a few preschoolers know the terms for genital organs. (Kenny, Dinehart, & Wurtele, 2015). The lack of sex education poses challenges to their natural sexual development. One of the complications of inadequate or nonexistent sex education is CSA, which is one of the most damaging forms of abuse (Soleimani, Maasoumi, Haghani, & Noorzaie, 2021).

Sex education is not only concerned with providing information about human physiology, the reproductive system, and preventing sexually transmitted diseases, but also aims to develop a respectful attitude toward sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as promoting safe sexual experiences free from coercion, discrimination, and abuse (WHO, 2024). Parents are a crucial group to target in delivering sex education to children, as they have numerous opportunities to incorporate these issues into everyday conversations. Additionally, parents play a primary role in teaching their children about safety in other areas, such as road safety, protection from diseases, and so on. They are well-positioned to adapt this knowledge to the cognitive and social development of their children (Foster, 2017).

Conversations between parents and their children about sexuality should be an interactive process that begins in early childhood and continues into early adulthood. Such discussions should be age-appropriate and align with the child's developmental stage. Education on the prevention of sexual abuse is one of the topics that should be addressed in early parent-child conversations (Kenny, Crocco, & Long, 2021). Parents recognize the importance of educating their children about sexual abuse issues but often lack the knowledge and skills to do so effectively. This is particularly challenging for parents in rural areas with lower educational levels. Prevention programs focused on parents are programs that involve parents in reducing the risk of child sexual abuse (J. Rudolph, Zimmer-Gembeck, Shanley, Walsh, & Hawkins, 2018).

Although child sexual abuse has global significance, many studies discuss the role of parents in children's sex education, but there has been no systematic scoping review that comprehensively examines parents' attitudes, barriers, and practices in providing sex education to prevent their children from sexual abuse. Therefore, a systematic scoping review is needed to strengthen the findings of existing research. This study aims to examine parents' attitudes, barriers, and practices in providing sex education to prevent their children from sexual abuse. This review aims to examine parent's attitudes, barriers, practices in providing sex education to prevent their children from sexual abuse.

METHODS

The design of this research uses a scoping review. The PRISMA protocol was used to select appropriate articles from five databases (PubMed, Scopus, Ebsco, SpringerLink, Science Direct) and manual searches. This research uses the PCC framework to determine study eligibility criteria: Population, Concept, and Context. The population in this study are parents who have children, with the concept of sex education to prevent sexual abuse and the context of developed countries and international developing countries. The keywords used are adjusted to Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) and Boolean operators, namely "parent*" AND "sex education" AND "prevent" OR "intervention" AND "child sexual abuse". The article search's inclusion and exclusion rules consist of the following:

Table 1. Criteria inclusion and Exclusion

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
a. Original article	a. Review/comment articles
b. Article published in English	b. Research protocol
c. Articles published	c. Books, Proceedings
d. in the last five years (2019-2023)	d. Articles discussing sexual abuse against adults
e. Full-text article	
f. Article discussing sex education by parents to prevent Child sexual abuse	

The search of 1,061 papers in the PubMed database yielded 40 from ScienceDirect, 320 from SpringerLink, 625 from Ebsco, 53 from Scopus, and eight manually searched articles. A total of 1,009 irrelevant articles were excluded due to mismatched titles and abstracts that did not reflect the focus of the search. Subsequently, 47 relevant articles were identified, and articles that met the inclusion criteria were further filtered. Ultimately, ten papers that satisfied the research criteria were selected, and the PRISMA Flowchart was used to illustrate the process of literature selection.

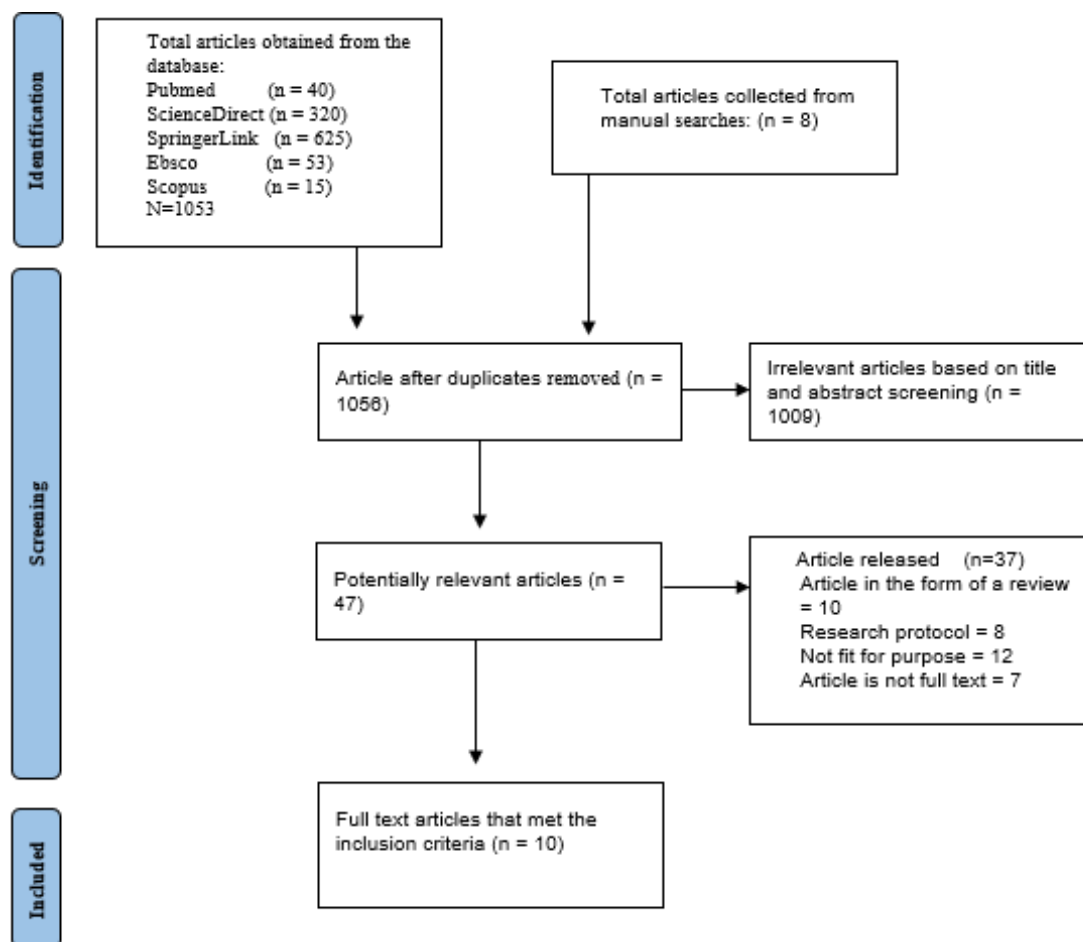


Figure 1. PRISMA Flowchart

Assessing Article Quality with Critical Appraisal

The identified papers were subsequently assessed for relevance and quality using the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) 2023 framework for Critical Appraisal of Article Quality.

Table 2. Critical Appraisal and Conditions

Research Method	Scale	Total Score Boundaries	Grade	Category
RCT	0 = Not applicable	27-39	A	Excellent
	1 = Unclear	14-26	B	Good
	2 = No	0-13	C	Not Good
	3 = Yes			
Quasi Eksperiment	0 = Not applicable	18-27	A	Excellent
	1 = Unclear	10-18	B	Good
	2 = No	0-9	C	Not Good
	3 = Yes			
Cross Sectional	0 = Not applicable	19-24	A	Excellent
	1 = Unclear	9-18	B	Good
	2 = No	0-8	C	Not Good
	3 = Yes			

Table 3. Critical Appraisal for Randomised Controlled Trial

Primary Study	Criteria													total	Grade
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
(Teo & Morawska, 2021)	3	3	3	2	2	3	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	31	A
(Soleimani et al., 2021)	3	3	3	1	1	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	31	A

Table 4 Critical Appraisal for Cross-Sectional Studies

Primary Study	Criteria										total	Grade
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8				
(Kenny, Crocco, & Long, 2020)	3	3	3	3	1	1	3	3			19	A
(AlRammah et al., 2019)	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	3			22	A
(J. I. Rudolph et al., 2022)	3	3	3	3	1	1	3	3			19	A
(Rohanachandra, Amarakoon, Alles, Amarasekera, & Mapatunage, 2023)	3	3	3	3	1	1	3	3			19	A
(Abdullah, Muda, Zain, & Hamid, 2020)	3	3	3	3	1	1	3	3			19	A
(Zhang et al., 2020)	3	3	3	3	1	1	3	3			19	A

Table 5. Critical Appraisal for Quasi Eksperiment

Primary Study	Criteria										total	Grade
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9			
(Cirik & Efe, 2019)	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	3		23	A
(Shaw et al., 2021)	3	3	3	2	1	3	3	3	3		23	A

Data Charting

Data mapping refers to the process of arranging and organizing information within a paragraph to identify its underlying relationships and patterns. It includes an analysis table that presents the article title, author, year, number of respondents, and research findings.

RESULTS

Article Characteristics

A total of ten articles were identified, comprising two randomized controlled trials (RCTs), six cross-sectional studies, and two quasi-experimental studies. The inclusion of RCTs is justified by their ability to establish causal relationships and provide high-quality evidence. However, they may have limitations in terms of generalizability due to controlled environments. Cross-sectional studies are valuable for capturing a snapshot of data at a specific point in time, offering insights into patterns and correlations, but they do not establish causality. Quasi-experimental studies, while not as robust as RCTs, are useful for examining interventions in real-world settings where randomization is not possible, although they may be more susceptible to biases. These study types collectively contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the research question by addressing different aspects of the issue.

This research was conducted in developed countries, with one article from the United States, two articles from Australia, one article from Saudi Arabia, and six articles from developing countries, including one from China, one from Zimbabwe, one from Malaysia, one from Sri Lanka, and one from Turkey. Two articles were published in 2019, three articles in 2020, three articles in 2021, one article in 2022, and one article in 2023, respectively, according to the year of publication.

Table 6. Charting data

No	Title/ author/ year	Country	Objective	Design	Participants/ sample	Results
1	Educating children through their parents to prevent child sexual abuse in Turkey (Cırık & Efe, 2019)	Turky	To assess the effectiveness of parental training in recognizing and preventing child sexual abuse (CSA); to evaluate the issues faced by parents; and to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the CSA training program.	Quasi Experiment	58 children (aged 3-6 years) and 64 parents.	Children whose parents provide CSA prevention education exhibit more awareness of private areas and what to do should they suspect sexual abuse.
2	Communicating with Children about Sexuality: A Randomised Controlled Trial of a Brief Parenting Discussion Group (Teo & Morawska, 2021)	Australia	To evaluate the effectiveness of a brief group-based parenting intervention for parents of children aged 3-10 years old parent-child communication about sexuality.	RCT	117 parents	The intervention had a significant impact on parents' positive responses to their children's sexuality-related questions. These findings provide initial support for short discussion groups on parenting in improving communication about sexuality between parents and children.
3	Parents' Plans to Communicate About Sexuality and Child Sexual Abuse with Their Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (Kenny et al., 2020)	USA	To understand how parents of children (aged 3-18 years) with Autism Spectr	Cross-Sectional	87 parents	Parents are concerned about the sexual victimization of their children with ASD. Although many have discussed certain aspects of sex education with their children, most feel unprepared to handle such discussions.
4	Parent-child communication and preventive practices for child sexual abuse among the general population: A	Saudi Arabia	Understanding parental communication and prevention practices center on child sexual abuse among a group of people in Saudi population	cross-sectional	400 parents	The communication practices of parents with their children regarding the prevention of sexual violence are effective and can be implemented. Further parental supervision of children concerning sexual abuse requires attention.

No	Title/ author/ year	Country	Objective	Design	Participants/ sample	Results
	community-based study (AlRammah et al., 2019)					
5	Child Sexual Abuse Prevention: Parental Discussion, Protective Practices and Attitudes (J. I. Rudolph et al., 2022)	Australia	To examine the extent to which parents : discussed CSA with their children	Cross-Sectional	248 parents with children aged 6 - 11 years.	The majority of parents reported discussion of sensitive topics including CSA to their children ; use of practices which may be protective against CSA; mediation of media and views on CSA prevention education
6	The Effect of an Education Program on Iranian Mothers' Self-Efficacy in Child Sex Education: A Randomized Controlled Clinical Trial (Soleimani et al., 2021)	Iran	To determine the effect of a child sex education program on a sample of mothers' self-efficacy in Iran	RCT	80 Mother	In the test group, statistically significant intra-group differences were observed on all four constructs on days 4 and 4 of week eight post-intervention compared to baseline (P<0.001). Additionally, all four constructs had statistically significant intergroup differences between the control and test groups (P<0.001).
7	Parental knowledge and attitudes about child sexual abuse and their practices of sex education in a Sri Lankan setting (Rohanachandra et al., 2023)	Sri Lanka	To understand parents' knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) and sex education, as the first step in planning a parent-mediated intervention to reduce CSA in Sri Lanka	Cross-sectional	385 parents (both mothers and fathers) had children under 18.	The majority of parents (67.3%) possessed insufficient knowledge regarding CSA. Additionally, nearly all parents (99.7%) concur that children should be provided with sex education to safeguard themselves. The majority of parents (78.7%) believe that parents are the most effective individuals to provide sex education.
8	The role of parents in providing sexuality education to their children	Malaysia	To assess the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of Malaysian parents in providing sexual education to their children	Cross-sectional	200 Malaysian parents	The majority of parents (79.5%) possess a high level of knowledge, and 82% of them concur that sexual information assists their children in identifying and avoiding sexual assault. The

No	Title/ author/ year	Country	Objective	Design	Participants/ sample	Results
	(Abdullah et al., 2020)					majority (91%) of them believed that they had encountered positive practices in the provision of sex education to their offspring. There was no correlation between the gender of the parents and their understanding of sex education.
9	Engaging Parents in Zimbabwe to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse: A Pilot Evaluation (Shaw et al., 2021)	Zimbabwe	Promote positive parenting practices and effective parent-child communication sexual risk reduction and HIV prevention	Quasi Experiment	248 parents	After the intervention, there was a significant increase in parental monitoring ($p < 1.001$) and communication about CSA among both parents and children ($p < 0.001$). Additionally, many parents reported engaging in discussions with individuals in their community regarding CSA ($p < 0.001$) and information regarding the location of services to be accessed if their child is subjected to violence ($p < 0.001$).
10.	Sexual Abuse Prevention Education for Preschool-Aged Children: Parents' Attitudes, Knowledge and Practices in Beijing, China (Zhang et al., 2020)	China	To understand the behaviors of parents in China, including their attitudes, knowledge, and practices with respect to their preschool-aged children regarding sexual abuse prevention education, and to explore factors associated with parental educational practices on child sexual abuse (CSA) prevention.	Cross-Sectional	440 adult respondents	The multivariate linear regression equation shows that the knowledge of both parents ($B = 0.11$, $SE B = 0.05$, $p = 0.03$) and attitudes ($B = 0.27$, $SE B = 0.10$, $p = 0.01$) are significant factors for parental communication on the prevention of sexual violence against their children. The findings from this study suggest that sexual abuse prevention education is crucial to be implemented with Chinese parents of preschool-aged children.

Thematic review results

The results of the review revealed three themes of sex education by parents for the prevention of child sexual abuse: parents' attitudes towards providing sex education ($n=3$), parent's barriers in providing sex education ($n=5$), and parent's practice in delivering sex education ($n=4$).

DISCUSSION

1. Parents' attitudes in providing sex education.

Study by Rohanachandra et al (2023) in sri langka, nearly all parents (99.7%, n=384) believe that children should receive sex education for self-protection. This aligns with the findings of (Abdullah et al., 2020), where the majority of malaysian parents (82%, n=164) agreed that sexual education should be provided to children, as it helps them recognize and protect themselves from sexual abuse. Parents in this study perceive themselves as the most appropriate figures to deliver sex education. With positive parental attitudes towards their role in sex education, parents can be considered an effective means of delivering sex education to children (Rohanachandra et al., 2023).

Parents play a crucial role in providing sexual education to their children while also protecting them from the long-term negative impacts of sexual abuse (Crea, Easton, Florio, & Barth, 2018). Parents have the greatest influence on their children's behavior and the formation of their sexual identity (Hrshika & Sharma, 2017). Sex education not only can prevent child sexual abuse, but also can help children build self-confidence, self-esteem, a positive self-image, and a healthy personality. Parents play an important role in this process. As those who understand their children's needs and development the best, they are in an ideal position to offer guidance in accordance with the child's growth stage, providing age-appropriate education in a natural and effective manner (Rofi'ah & Fawaidi, 2023).

2. Parent's barriers in providing sex education.

Many parents agree to provide sex education to their children; however, many are often reluctant to discuss sex education with their children for various reasons, such as feeling that they lack accurate information on how to prevent child sexual abuse (Cirik & Efe, 2019), feeling embarrassed when discussing sexual information (45.0%, n=90), and worrying that the information might be inaccurate (44.5%, n=89) (Abdullah et al., 2020). Parents find conversations with their children about sexuality difficult and uncomfortable. One in six parents who have discussed CSA with their children reported feeling uncomfortable talking about it (J. I. Rudolph et al., 2022). Similarly, the results of a previous study in Turkey showed that although 92.3% (n=36) of the parents stated that they taught their children about private parts, only five parents (13.2%) stated that they encountered problems while teaching this. These problems included using other terms instead of shame, penis and vagina, and receiving negative feedback from other family members while using the names of private parts (Cirik & Efe, 2019).

CSA is a highly sensitive and completely forbidden issue, which, while common in society, is often ignored or deliberately avoided in many cases to avoid embarrassment, as well as the taboo nature of discussing KSA (AlRammah et al., 2019). This perception is influenced by cultural norms and the belief that discussions about sexuality may encourage undesirable behaviors in children. Many parents delay conversations about sexual issues until their children reach adolescence (Kenny et al., 2020). Parents must create a safe and supportive environment where children feel comfortable discussing sensitive topics like sex education (Nafisah et al., 2023). In addition to verbal communication, parents can utilize various educational tools such as pamphlets, videos, and interactive platforms to supplement their discussions with visual aids and practical examples (Araiza-Alba et al., 2021; Nofiana & Tasuah, 2020).

3. Parents' practices in delivering sex education.

The majority of parents teach their children about their private body parts, safe touches, warn them against going with or accepting gifts from strangers, and educate them about body safety to prevent sexual abuse (AlRammah et al., 2019; Kenny et al., 2021; J. I. Rudolph et al., 2022). Parents can begin by having open and age-appropriate discussions with their children about body safety and the prevention of sexual abuse (Shumba, Heath, Heath, & Mutambo, 2023). These conversations help children understand boundaries, recognize inappropriate behavior, and empower them to speak up if they feel uncomfortable (Kenny et al., 2021). Teaching children about

good touch and bad touch, as well as about their private body parts, is essential in helping them protect themselves from abuse (Muslu, Kolutek, & Alkaya, 2021).

Cırık & Efe (2019) study shows that the majority of parents teach their children to refer to genital areas using correct anatomical terminology. This aligns with Abdullah et al (2020) study, where the majority of parents (98.3%) reported teaching their children the proper names for their genital organs. Sex education has been shown to benefit parent-child relationships, where children are more open in sharing issues related to sexuality with their parents.

4. Parents' start introducing sex education from early childhood

Parents need to start educating their children about protection from child sexual abuse as early and gradually as possible (Cırık & Efe, 2019). About half of Sri Lanka parents (56.4%, n = 217) believe that sex education should begin during preschool years, while 36.9% (n = 142) believe that primary school is the best period to start sex education (Rohanachandra et al., 2023). In line with Abdullah et al (2020) study, parents in Malaysia provide sex education to their children at an early age. Discussions about KSA, in particular, should begin early, especially since many adolescents (about 30%) become victims of sexual abuse before the age of 9.

Introducing sex education early can help children establish a correct understanding of sexual knowledge and develop a healthy attitude towards sexuality as they grow older (Jiang, 2023). Children who receive sex education from an early age are better equipped to recognize and respond to inappropriate behaviors, reducing their vulnerability to sexual abuse (Nofiana & Tasuah, 2020). Additionally, sex education at a young age can help children develop good morals, avoid promiscuity, and establish a foundation for healthy relationships in the future (Kurdi & Afif, 2021).

Parental support and engagement play a significant role in shaping children's attitudes toward sexuality and relationships. Parents are often the primary educators and influencers in a child's life, making their involvement essential in providing accurate information and guidance on sexual health matters (Kusmiwiyati & Dwi, 2021). Parents play a significant role in shaping children's attitudes toward sexuality and relationships, making their involvement essential in providing accurate information and guidance on sexual health matters (Shafique et al., 2024). Parental involvement in sex education programs can help create a supportive and open environment where children feel comfortable asking questions and seeking guidance on sensitive topics related to sexuality (Xie & Tsai, 2019).

CONCLUSION

Parents play a vital role in delivering sex education to prevent child sexual abuse. The majority of parents are supportive of sex education and recognize themselves as the most suitable individuals to provide this education. By creating a safe and supportive environment, parents can help children feel comfortable discussing sensitive topics such as sex education. Teaching children to identify body parts and understand safe touch is essential for developing self-protection skills, which in turn boosts their self-confidence, self-esteem, positive self-image, and overall well-being. Future research should prioritize investigating age-specific sex education strategies and examining the long-term effects of parental involvement in preventing child sexual abuse. Longitudinal studies could offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of these educational approaches over time.

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