

# Sex Education Beyond School: Implications for Practice and Research

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**Abstract** – *The negative consequences of teenage sexual behavior are issues of concern in Malaysia and many other Muslim countries. In Malaysia, sexual health education is taught various subjects namely Islamic Education, Moral Education, Science, Additional Science and Biology. Current Malaysia Government implemented new sexual health education module in primary school on 2014. The aim of this paper is to review the current literature on school sex education and the role social factors play in teenage sexual behavior. This paper argues that school cannot stand alone provide sufficient guidance to change teenage sexual behavior. Cooperative between schools, young people, their families and communities is crucial to enhance the effectiveness of sex education. This information is important to facilitate the comprehensive sexual health education in Malaysian schools. Copyright © 2015 Penerbit Akademia Baru - All rights reserved.*

**Keywords:** Sex education, Sexual health education, Teenage sexual behavior

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The emphasize on the need of sex education starts to show when statistic related to moral issues such as free mixing, baby born out of wedlock, drug abuse and addiction, rape, theft, prostitution and sex out of wedlock start to increase rapidly from time to time. The desire to know more about matters related to sex is believed to be the source to this problem. For Islamic countries, sex education is still not being taught widely such as in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia. Elements of sex education is inserted in some subjects and discussed only superficially. Recent news in Malaysia about a girl who possibly gave birth at age 12 has provoked a serious political debate over the high rate of teenage pregnancies in Malaysia [1]. Politicians started suggest new single subject on sex education. The adverse consequences of early sexual initiation, such as increased lifetime sexual partners, unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections are issues of concern in Malaysia as Muslim country. The aim of his paper is to review the current literature on school sex education and the role of social factors play in teenage sexual behavior.

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

The Mendeley databases were searched using the term ‘sex education’, ‘sexual behaviour’, and teenagers/adolescent/ young people in combination.

### **3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The majority of the studies reviewed involved young people in Malaysia. Five key themes were identified: sex education at school, family environment, religion, interactions with peers, and media.

#### **3.1 Sex Education at School**

In Malaysia, the subject of sex education is still in the discussion. The Ministry of Education has developed a sex education module to be known as the "Family Health Education" in the government's efforts to help teens keep themselves against sexual crime and improve their morale [2]. However, the implementation of sex education is still in the process of evaluation. It has not been fully implemented. The opinions and views of various parties accounted for good result. The Ministry of Education has yet to determine what should be taught and who is qualified to teach sex education to students. In addition, at what age students should be given sex education is and how to convey information on sex is still a question. Although there is no special subject entitled sex education in schools, the Ministry of Education has introduced subjects related to sexuality and reproductive health. Topics related to sex education are presented in a variety of subjects such as Health and Physical Education, Islamic Studies, Moral Education, Science, Additional Science and Biology. The curriculum is available in such subjects that discussed matters related to physical health, sexuality, reproduction, and moral aspects of the relationship between the sexes [3].

Distribution of teaching subjects related to the topic of sex education causes students not to look at the comprehensive sex-related matters [4] [5] as an example of a biology teacher explains the aspects of physical, legal and religious teacher explains religious value and the moral teacher explaining the social consequences. Somehow these teachers repeat the same information in their teaching. The implementation of sex education in the present situation in schools must be speeded up to tackle the problems related to promiscuity and unwanted pregnancies among young people [6]. Azizah Jaafar and Chan Siew Lee [7] studied student and teachers perceptions regarding issues on sex education. Based on the findings of this research, it showed that 53.6% of the teachers explained that the content of sexual information from the books is already enough for the students to understand sex education issues. In contrast, 58.2% of them stated that the information given in the book is not fully covered important aspects of sex education. This findings being support by other research which [8] showed that 95% of the respondents thought that sex education was not held in school formally. About 380 university students were involved in this study as response to their evaluation and experience of sexual education. The research also reveals that sexual education in classroom across Malaysia is mostly delivered through the Science/Biology and Islamic Education subjects. Teachers seem unwilling to teach sex-related topics due to ill-prepared and untrained to explain in a proper way. The present sexuality education could not prevent teenagers from involving into illegal sexual activity. These findings are very important as it related to a comprehensive sexual health education in Malaysia.

#### **3.2 Family Environment**

Sex and sexuality are not common topics of conversation between parents and their children. Talking about sex can be a tremendous challenge for parents and adolescents [9]. Barriers to communicate in sexual issues were identified: lack of communication skills, language, obstacles, limited sexual knowledge of parents, lack of available time, traditional way (not receiving any sex education from their own parents). Parents agreed that schools should

provide comprehensive sex education to educate pupils regarding the elements of sexuality [10] Islamic Education teacher is seen as the individual who is responsible for delivering effective knowledge of sex education than parents. Teaching sex education should be shared responsibility of school and home [11].

Sex education should be taught according to age level because the children's age development varies. For example, at the age of 7-10 years old, children should be taught about the adab (manner) of asking for permission and the adab of sight. At the age of 10-14 years old, children should be taught to avoid and hinder themselves from lusts. The adab of sexual relationship can be exposed to them when they are 14-16 years old. When they have arrived to the adulthood or akil baligh, they need to be taught on how to take care of honor and self-respect [12] [13] Most scholars agree with the opinion proposed by Abdullah Nasih Ulwan who states that sex education for children should undergo three distinct stages. Based on these three stages, children should be given exposure in matters related to sex according to their age. If they are not educated and supervised well in every stage, it might cause them to be involved in activities related to sexual misconduct. Thus, all parties in the community should play their roles in giving appropriate sexual education in adherence to Islamic teachings; be it parents, teachers and the surrounding community.

### **3.3 Religion**

The positive impact of religious commitment and participation in religious activities were an important factor enabling teenagers to sustain sexual abstinence [14] Religious practices offered them to share similar values with their friends.

In Islam, sex education is the process to educate and disseminating knowledge about aspects related to sexual matters between men and women which needed to be fundamentalized on the concepts of faith and belief to Allah the Almighty who created human and is ever-knowing about the human Himself. Apart from that, sex education is to nurture the appropriate lust and desire which adhere to the teachings of Islam so that it becomes the blessed lust and desire, which give peace and pleasure in life and thus hindering human from adultery which is truly hated by Allah the Almighty (Al-Araf 7:11; Al Baqarah 2:30-38 & 221; An Nisa 4:1 & 3; Hud 11:40 & 71;)

### **3.4 Interaction with Peers**

Adolescents preferred to discuss sexual issues with friends than parents. Johari et.al [8] found that, friends were the major source of information about sex and relationship. They make a friend with friends who had similar values rather than similar behavior. Friendship can provide a common similarities in sharing sexual information and intimate feelings, seek support they desired. Friends give great influence on teenagers' sexual behavior.

### **3.5 Role of Media**

Media plays an important source to obtain sexual information among teenagers. They seek the information that was not available in the family or school. The desire to know something immediately influences teenagers to find the answer by their own through media [15].

### **3.6 Implications for Research and Practice**

Based on this study, there are three implications to improve sex education in Malaysia. First, parents' involvement should be integral part of the sex education curricula. The establishment

of partnership between schools and families would facilitate collaboration in providing sex education to students. Create an enabling environment that foster open mutual communication between parents and children on sexual issues. Second, teachers' readiness to teach sex education along with special training and educate them on knowledge and skills for effective teaching and learning process to student's needs, desires and correct understanding. Third, the perspectives of young people should be heard.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSSION**

Effective sex education programmes is challenging especially in Muslim country such Malaysia. Sex education needs cooperative involvement between family, friends, religious teaching and media to be effective.

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