

“SEX EDUCATION: AN OVERVIEW FROM QURANIC APPROACH”

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ABSTRACT

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. In fact, sex education is not a taboo issue in Islam. In addition, 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. The Quran teaches about human sexuality which has further been explained in Sunnah. This paper discusses the Quranic verses related to human sexuality. Hence, this paper also discusses various topics related to sex education, family values, marriage life, women status and various causes of and prevention related to sexual health problem.

Keywords: sex education, human sexuality, Quranic approach

INTRODUCTION

Islamic scholars have discussed matters related to sex education. Sex education should be taught to children as it fulfills the demands of human life based on Islamic law (Abdullah Nasih Ulwan, 2009; Malik Badri 2000; Sarwar 1996; Shaikh Abdul Mabud 1998; Syed Ali Ashraf 1998; al-Afendi 1980). The basic education of a child begins at home because the child is like a white cloth shaping by his family especially his parents. Islam regards parents as the first person responsible for introducing and teaching sex education to their children from childhood. Sex education should be understood by its purpose, scopes and purposes to avoid misunderstanding and conflict.

There are some definitions of sex education given by Muslim scholars based on their understanding. Abdullah Nasih Ulwan (1989) stated that sex education should be taught to children clearly and comprehensively when children have sense. He defined sex education as:

Teaches, explains and warns teenagers about the issues related to sex, instinct, lust and their relationship in marriage ... until they grow up with an understanding of the meaning of life. Teenagers know what is justified and what is prohibited and they practice Islamic ethics and behavior in their life.

Sex education can be defined as the process of teaching, explaining and reminding students (teenagers) about things related to sex, instinct, lust and relationship in marriage. This process occurs until they become mature and understand the meaning of life (Abdullah Nasih Ulwan, 1989). According to Abdullah Nasih Ulwan, a student should be able to differentiate between the things that can be done and the things that need to be avoided and practise Islamic ethics and behaviour in their life. Therefore, sex education should be taught to children clearly and comprehensively when the children have sense (Abdullah Nasih Ulwan, 1989).

THE IMPORTANCE OF SEX EDUCATION

A fully organized and thorough Islamic Sex Education is able to produce students with strong faith and noble personalities. According to al-Ghazali (2004), having noble characters puts an individual at the highest place in religion. Through Islamic sex education, students are able to understand things related to sexuality based on Islamic values thus forming noble personalities.

First, Islamic sex education is comprehensive. A comprehensive curriculum on sexuality and reproduction should be taught based on the Quran and the Sunnah. It aims to educate students to gain intellectual, physical and emotional balance. This balance will produce noble students who can act according to the soundness of the mind and the teachings of Islam.

Second, sex education is one of the areas of knowledge that must be taught in Islamic teachings. Sex education is a requirement to every individual (fardu Ain). This discipline talks about sexuality, reproduction and biological aspects. According to al-Qardawi (2013), sex education is closely related to halal and haram, reward and sin, and faith. A clear understanding of sex education and a strong religious belief can prevent individuals from doing things that are prohibited by religion such as adultery, abortion, child abandonment and so on.

Thirdly, sex education is a medium to develop faith towards Allah. Human is created to worship Allah and obey His commandments (al-Attas, 1992). Therefore, sex education is able to strengthen the relationship between a man and his Creator. The topics discussed in sex education emphasise the recognition of the existence of Allah, the beauty of Allah's creation, the values of Islam and the obedience to His teachings such as purification, covering aurah, protecting self's dignity, the relationship between men and women, and the prohibition of adultery. Clear images contained in Islamic sex education based on Islamic law are able to produce a generation with pure heart, spirit, sense and intellect to perform their daily life as a Muslim (Muhamad Zahiri, 2005).

Fourth, sex education meets human needs. Humans are created by Allah s.w.t. with lust. The role of sex education is to provide sex-related knowledge based on the value of Islam in order to educate people to control their lust from doing prohibited things. Marriage is a way taught by Islam to fulfill human lust.

Fifth, sex education is able to create harmony between human beings, their families and the community. Islamic sex education emphasises the importance of family institution, the importance of protecting the offspring, the prohibition of fornication, the role of husbands and wives, and respect for each other.

Islamic sex education is based on the objectives of Islamic law (*Maqasid Syariah*) (Abdullah Nasih Ulwan, 2009; al-Ghazali t.th.; Muhamad Zahiri & Rahim, 2010) that includes five main aspects which are protecting religion, property, offspring, intellect and dignity.

THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF ISLAMIC SEX EDUCATION

Qur'an is a holy book that has guidelines about life where human beings must follow to fulfill their duty as servants and khalifah of Allah and this has been described in details through the Sunnah of Rasulullah s.a.w. These two sources have been described by the Islamic scholars to be clearly understood by the Muslim community. There are 87 verses in the Qur'an which deal with self-dignity, marriage and family institution. There are 92 verses which describe the topics of sexual misconduct and fornication, 44 verses explain the boundaries and etiquette between men and women, 33 verses tell about parental and child relationships and 4 verses related to impurities. Man must obey all the rules which Allah has commanded. Sex education is largely related to halal and haram issues and the concept of *amar maaruf nahi munkar*.

Dawod O.S. Noibi (1998) stated that all the issues and questions that exist in sex education can be sufficiently explained from the Quran and the Sunnah. The topics taught are aimed at people to worship Allah s.w.t. and preserve the well-being of human life on this earth. The main objective of sex education is to educate the public in understanding sexual

life in line with religious demands. Humans are creatures of Allah who are obligated to fulfill their duty to do what have been commanded and to leave what have been prohibited as a symbol of worship to Allah. The Qur'an has explained this situation in Surah al-Zariyat 51: 56 which means:

I have only created jinns and men, that they may serve Me

(Yusof Ali, 2017)

Allah s.w.t. has provided guidelines for mankind to perform their role as a servant and a caliph. The following objectives of sex education are to help Muslims to control and regulate their sexual desire and protect them from prohibited acts like adultery. Al-Qardawi (2013) stated that sexual desire is the instinct that Allah has given to mankind to fulfill their needs. This sexual desire is endowed by Allah to develop heredity by giving birth through marriage. It is in accordance with the words of Allah s.w.t. in surah an-Nur 24: 32 which means:

Marry those among you who are single, or the virtuous ones among your slaves, male or female: if they are in poverty, Allah will give them means out of His grace: for Allah encompasseth all, and He knoweth all things.

(Yusof Ali, 2017)

Protecting self-dignity is an obligation emphasised in Islam and it is the best way of controlling human behaviour from disgrace (Abdullah Nasih Ulwan, 2009). Referring to 87 Qur'anic verses which explain about self-dignity, marriage and family institution, most of the verses emphasise on protecting self-dignity. Therefore, the third objective of sex education is to expose Muslims to understand sexuality matters and protect their dignity as outlined by Islam. This is stated in surah al-Isra 17: 70 which means:

THE STAGE OF SEX EDUCATION

Abdullah Nasih Ulwan (2009) has clearly outlined that sex education should be taught according to the age because the level of development of each child differs. Parents are the

best individuals to teach children about sexuality. Abdullah Nasih Ulwan (2009) outlined that sex education for children must go through three stages:

1. *Tamyiz (Mumayyiz)* stage (7-10 years old)

At this stage, children are taught to recognise their identity and value that are closely related to biological organs and the differences between men and women. The concept of purification is also taught which is the practice before and after urination and defecation. When children reach 7-10 years old, the separation of bed between sons and daughters should be done to avoid incest. Children need to be taught how to get permission to enter the parents' room. The etiquette of lowering gaze is also taught.

2. *Murahaqah* stage (10-14 years old)

At this stage, children are exposed to biological functions scientifically. Things related to covering aurah for men and women, the relationship between male and female and preserving modesty and dignity are described in detail. They are also taught obligatory bath and intercourse. Discussions that can generate sexual desire should be avoided.

3. *Baligh/Puberty* stage (14-16 years old)

At this age, children are taught about the meaning of puberty. Parents should explain the danger of adultery. Pre-marital sex is not accepted in Islamic teachings. The explanation must touch the disadvantages of adultery in terms of religion, health, psychology and emotional stress.

If we observe carefully, the stages mentioned by Abdullah Nasih Ulwan between the ages and the topics to be taught at certain age indicate that the teaching of sex education should be appropriate to the children's ability, maturity and thought. For example, it is not appropriate to teach children about sexual desire at the age of 7-10 as children will not be able to understand the information because of their immature thoughts. Therefore, the age of children

and their level of thinking, ability and maturity should be taken into account before being exposed to the elements of sex education.

SEX EDUCATION ACCORDING TO ISLAM AND THE WEST

Sex education in Islam should have certain limitations. In the West, free and safe sexual practices are strongly encouraged. This issue is contrary to sex education taught in Islam. Syed Ali Ashraf (1998) stressed that a Muslim cannot accept Western sex education taught in schools for practicing a concept free from morality and safe sexual activities. This causes the Muslim community in Europe to be in dilemma and concern about Western sex education.

Shaikh Abdul Mabud (1998) stated that the topics of Islamic sex education should be emphasised in Muslim schools. Among the topics proposed are a) health and sexual hygiene; b) sexual purity before and after marriage; c) the value of marriage and family; d) the role of men and women at home and in community; decision-making skills on sexual matters; f) politeness and Islamic manners; g) interaction between genders; h) social relationship; i) dress code; j) the ethical and moral principles of Islam. These topics will include a thorough survey on social and moral issues such as the relationship before marriage, marriage spouse selection, population growth, abortion and birth control based on Islamic guidelines.

D'Oyen (1996) stated that sex education in Islam emphasises more on educating boys and girls about the relationship between genders and how to understand their personality and behaviour in everyday life based on understanding, thinking and moral aspects through humanity values.

Most Muslim scholars view that sex education emphasises more on the aspects of marriage and family life as a basis in society. Family institution can form affection among human beings and prevent moral problems. Islamic sex education also prohibits the act of adultery and explains the punishment as a result of such acts. Sexual and reproduction topics are taught to children from the beginning in accordance with the Islamic law and in line with the objectives of human creation.

Scholars have analysed a number of Quranic verses and hadiths which clearly show that Muslims are encouraged to study knowledge related to sexual and reproductive health. Allah s.w.t. has set religious rules aim at preserving the well-being of humankind. Based on the word of Allah which means (al-Zariyat: 49; al mukminun 23: 5-7):

And of everything We have created pairs: that ye may receive instruction. (49)

Who abstain from sex, Except with those joined to them in the marriage bond, or (the captives) whom their right hands possess— for (in their case) they are free from blame, But those whose desires exceed those limits are transgressors— (5-7)

(Yusof Ali, 2017)

This verse explains Allah's prohibition on adultery. This prohibition does not only forbid adultery but approaching adultery is also strictly forbidden. Khalwat is one of the acts that leads to adultery. The act of being alone in a quiet place encourage the male and female couples to have sexual misconduct due to the temptations of evil.

Apart from adultery, homosexual is also prohibited by Allah s.w.t. Allah has mentioned this disgusting act done by the people of prophet Luth who practiced homosexual during their time. Allah s.w.t. has stated in the Quran which means (al-Araf 7: 80):

We also (sent) Lut: he said to his people: "Do ye commit lewdness such as no people in creation (ever) committed before you? (80)

(Yusof Ali, 2017)

Allah has created man and woman on this earth. They need and complete each other in this life. It is in accordance with the words of Allah s.w.t. which means (ar-Rum 30: 21; al-Baqarah 2: 187):

Permitted to you on the night of the fasts, is the approach to your wives. They are your garments. And ye are their garments. Allah knoweth what ye used to do secretly among yourselves; but He turned to you and forgave you; so now associate with them, and seek what Allah hath ordained for you and eat and drink, until the white thread of

dawn appear to you distinct from its black thread; then complete your fast till the night appears; but do not associate with your wives while ye are in retreat in the mosques. Those are limits (set by) Allah; approach not nigh thereto. Thus doth Allah make clear His signs to men that they may learn self-restraint. (187)

(Yusof Ali, 2017)

It is the nature of human creation where different genders are always attracted to each other to create a more intimate relationship. The best way that Islam outlines is through marriage. Allah s.w.t. has mentioned in the Quran which means (an-Nur 24: 32):

Marry those among you who are single, or the virtuous ones among your slaves, male or female: if they are in poverty, Allah will give them means out of His grace: for Allah encompasseth all, and He knoweth all things. (32)

(Yusof Ali, 2017)

Islam also allows a man to have four wives. It is mentioned in the Qur'an which means (an-Nisa 4: 3):

If ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, two, or three, or four; but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one, or that which your right hands possess. That will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice. (3)

(Yusof Ali, 2017)

Sex education has been implemented in Islam. Preventive measures to prevent sexual misconduct among the community are also emphasized. For example, Islam encourages parents to separate the bed between son and daughter when they reach 10 years old. This education is able to give clear understanding to the children on gender differences as well as to avoid having a close relationship among siblings of different genders. This way can avoid incest act in a family.

Covering aurah is also compulsory in order to prevent sexual misconduct among different genders. Islam has outlined the limits of aurah between men and women, men and men as well as women and women.

This is the best mechanism in maintaining self-dignity especially among women. Islam preserves religion by preserving human dignity in order to perform the duty of a servant and a caliph of Allah. It is in accordance with the words of Allah s.w.t. which means (al-Ahzab 33:59):

O prophet! tell thy wives and daughters, and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their persons (when abroad): that is most convenient, that they should be known (as such) and not molested: and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (59)

(Yusof Ali, 2017)

This is the beauty of Islam in maintaining human relationship. The boundaries between men and women are highly emphasised in Islamic sex education. The relationship between parents and children, siblings, relatives, and societies are also being taught to prevent forbidden relationships leading to sexual misconduct. Therefore, guarding self-dignity is very important because Allah Himself glorifies man. This is clearly proven in his words (al-Isra 17: 70):

We have honoured the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours, above a great part of Our Creation. (70)

(Yusof Ali, 2017)

CONCLUSION

As conclusion Islamic sex education can provide a better understanding on human life cycle in accordance to Islamic way of life. Its clearly able to give human knowledge on the relationship between religion and sexuality as well as the matters permitted and prohibited in Islam; to control the lust from doing prohibited things; to recognise and obey Allah as the Creator; to help and guide teenagers to understand sexuality matters from Islamic point of view; to help teenagers understand the real concept of family institution in Islam; and to understand the relationship between sexuality and social issues arise (Muhamad Zahiri & Rahimi, 2010). All the listed evidence from Quranic verses, hadiths and Muslim scholar clearly show that Muslims are encouraged to study knowledge related to sexual and reproductive health.

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