

13th ICLEHI 2019 Osaka 058-049 Zarina Eshak

## **The Importance of Sexuality Education to Preschool Children in Malaysia**

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### **Introduction**

This article discusses sexuality health education in the context of preschool children in Malaysia. This study aims to examine the importance of sexuality education to preschool children through the preschool teacher's perspectives. The study was a survey method using a questionnaire comprising Likert scale with questions analyzed with percentage. The sample were randomly choose comprised of 45 pre-school teachers from Tanah Merah, Kelantan, Malaysia. A total of 44 participants (97.8%) agreed that sexuality education among preschool children help to prevent children from sexual abuse or criminal behavior related to sexuality. While 42 participants (93.4%) agreed that preschoolers should be taught verbally and related exercises about the sexual body parts and the need to take care of the members. A total of 36 participants (80%) agreed that role of parents is crucial to ensuring the success of sexuality education to help the school. The overall study found that 40 participants (88.9%) agreed that the importance of establishing a sexuality education module would provide guidelines for teachers and parents thus to ensure sexuality education appropriate to the development and needs of preschool children. Howbeit, this study aim to help preschool teachers to excogitate more sexuality education activities efficiently so the learning not only give exposure to children about sexuality education, thus combat sexual crime involving children.

*Keywords:* Sexuality education, importance of sexuality education, preschoolers, preschool teacher

### **Introduction**

Miscellaneous social phenomena have happen among Malaysian community today due to disparate activities done by children and adolescents. However, because children often views as heirs of the country, their activities become the center of attention and received attentiveness from all walks of life. The Social Welfare Department's statistics show that 5,779 child sexual abuse cases were recorded from 2010 to 2015 with an average of 963 cases a year (Berita Harian Online, 2017, October 6). The statistics from the Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM) recorded 2,759 rape cases, 412 incest cases, 1,423 cases of homicide and 422 other offenses involving victims below 18 years for 2015 and 2016. Regardless the result of the reports cases shown, Malaysian community still considering the issue of sexuality is a taboo issue and decline to discuss with children as cases are still widespread at the present time. Sexuality education is a lifelong learning process that encompasses all the dimensions of sexuality to achieve four objectives, namely providing information, building value, building interpersonal skills, and building responsible concepts (Wazakili, 2010). This education emphasizes sexual development, human reproduction, health, interpersonal relationships, mutual love, close relationships, body language and a person's gender role (Ang Chai Tin, 2014). Child sexuality education ought to divulge efficaciously to pupils to enhance knowledge and create awareness

concern on sexuality (Ang & Lee, 2013). This can avert them from engaging in sexual abuse and sexual crimes cases.

### Literature Review

Studies studying sexuality education on preschool children are less in Malaysia. After the researcher examined, the study by Mastura binti Karimuddin titled The level of readiness of the teaching of sexuality education of teachers of the early childhood education teacher of the Ipoh Campus Teacher Education Institution (2017) using aspects of the readiness of the study included teachers' demographic aspects, the level of teacher knowledge and topics that the teacher feels good to teach preschool children. The study was carried out using questionnaires and was administered to 61 trainees teachers of early childhood education courses. The questionnaire consists of 4 sections comprising socio-demographic characteristics, teachers' knowledge faculty, attended courses, teacher confidence level, teacher knowledge level and teacher choice topics. The findings of the findings suggest that the prospective early childhood education teacher will show a high degree of readiness to teach sexuality education.

Studies from Wight and Buston (2003) have conducted studies on the teaching of sexuality education for teachers in American service. SHARE Module (Sexual Health And Relationships-Safe, Happy And Responsible) is used in this study. There are 20 sessions devoted to completing the contents of the modules taught in the Personal and Social Education subjects. The training duration given is five days to complete the module that is broken into three parts. A total of 81 teachers in the service were involved in the study. Methods used to collect data are observation, interviews, questionnaires, and teaching and learning observations.

### Objective

The following research questions have been proposed as the basis for this study :

1. Does sexuality health education help children from sexual abuse or criminal behavior related to sexuality?
2. What form of teaching approach should the teacher use in teaching sexuality education?
3. Does role of parents important in sexuality education?
4. Does the construction of a sexuality teaching module that is used as a guide to teachers and parents important for preschoolers?

### Theory

The theoretical framework of this study is the result of a literature review on sexuality education, teaching and learning theory, western and Islamic pedagogical theories and theories of *akhlak* and spirituality. Theoretical framework for this study is the combination of the following theories:

- (i) The pillar of sexuality education of sexuality, *Sigmund Freud's Psychotic Theory* (personality structure concept), *Maslow's Theory of Needs* (1943) and *Robert Havighurst's Development Theory*. (Sociology & Anthropology)
- (ii) Ethical Theory ('ilm al-akhlak) Ahmad Rushdi (2012), Rational Theory of Emotive Therapy (RET) Albert Ellis 1955.

The crucial concept in Freud's psychoanalytic theory is the concept of personality structure which divided into id, ego and superego. Id is present at birth which is a part of the unconscious personality in connection with the satisfaction of needs controlled by the

excitement and avoiding pain. Id is driven by libido (sex appetite) which places a fundamental urge for human desires. Ego also controls Id's desire so not to contravene with values and norms of society. Superego (intuition or filter) also represents as social actuator for psychic structures or known as a part of a moral personality. This element develops gradually as children live conscientiously. Therefore, by controlling Id's desire, sexuality education can be adapted into children's learning. The Robert Havinghurst approach is emphasized in this study as it is a sociological and anthropological approach. According to this view, children are the result of sociocultural pressure that affects them (Muzdalifah, 2007). The values and institutions of each culture will produce a certain personality. Therefore, this approach should understand the cultural, sociocultural and psychological factors to enable us to fully understand the children. Allude to Maslow's Theory of Needs, student's prerequisite factor are the basic needs of safety, love, self-esteem and self-perfection. The need and necessity of the students need must align to ensure a positive self-concept in line with lesson planned. According to Zeynep and Mert (2014), Maslow's motivational needs are met through three types of rewards. Firstly, the highest level of self-esteem is fully satisfied through intrinsic rewards such as social honor, appreciation, prestigious awards, and social praise by getting good names. Secondly at the level of self-respect, it is derived from intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Thirdly, at the level of social needs up to the physiological needs, it is obtained through extrinsic rewards solely.

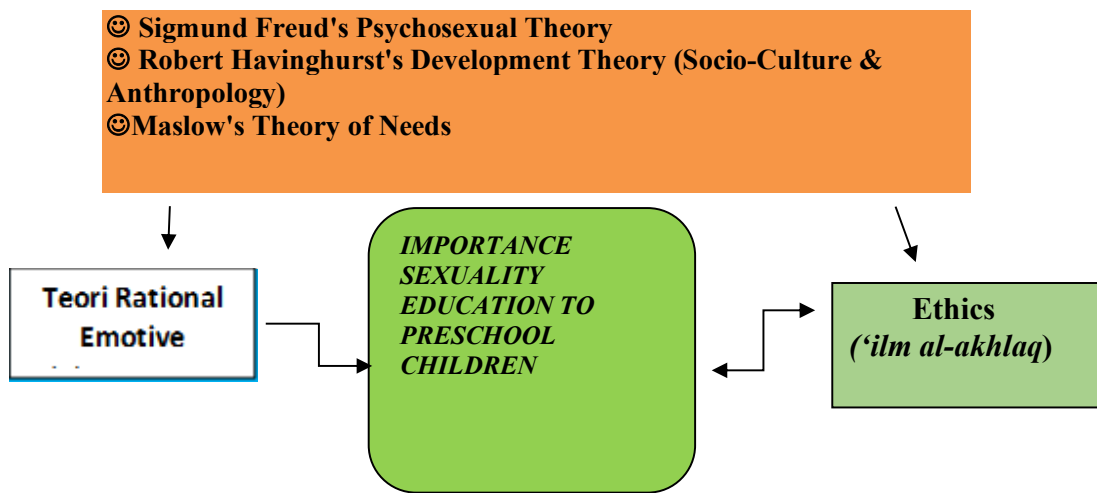
In the development of Islamic studies, sexuality education is known as *altarbiyyah al-jinsiyyah*, (Ahmad Rushdi, 2012). Some studies conclude that sex education (*altarbiyyah al-jinsiyyah*) in Islam is part of *akhlaq* education, because besides addressing sexuality issues, sex education also addresses ethics of dressing, behavior, association, hygiene, and worship. So *akhlaq* education in the context of Islamic psychology is a suggestion to educate children in order to balance their potential in the best possible way to produce good academics in future. The science of controlling the soul in Islamic philosophy is called ethics (*'ilm al-akhlaq*). This science teaches how human beings are virtuous and ethical. Meanwhile, according to Albert Ellis, Rational Emotive Therapy (RET) Theory is a psychotherapy which explains that human beings are born with potential, both to think rationally and genuinely or to think irrational and evil. However, humans does have tendencies toward self-destruction, avoiding thinking, procrastinate, self-condemnation, superstition, intolerance, perfection and self-reproach and avoiding growth and self-development (Yurimazaya, 2013). In nutshell, this study amalgamate Freud's psychosexual theory, Robert Havinghurst's Theory of Growth (socio-culture & anthropology), Maslow's Theory of Needs, Ethics Theory (*'ilm al-akhlaq*) and Rational Emotive Therapy (RET) in the study of importance of teaching sexuality education to preschool children. Hence, through the selection of theories underlying this study, it is intern to help to elevate the comprehension of sexuality education to children through education, thus vanquish the problem of sexual crimes among preschoolers.

### **The Significance of the Study**

The study of the importance of sexuality education to preschool children is based on the following rationalizations: One of the important purposes of sex education in children is to keep the body safe from people who are bad in childhood. With knowledge about sex, children are able to resist, avoid, complain to the closest person if someone is sexually abusive (Rezkisari: 2015). In addition to preventing sexual abuse, sexual education also avoids the action that should be taken if it confronts the situation. The delivery of effective sexuality education to pre-school children will enhance knowledge and awareness about sexuality (Ang & Lee, 2013). This will prevent them from engaging

in sexual harassment and sexual crimes cases. Various methods can be used to instill sexual education against children. Some methods are like underwear rules (Sri Wahyuning Astuti, 2017). Underwear rules are a simple guide to helping parents to provide sex education to children at home that other people can not touch them. In addition to the Underwear rules, sex education can also be done through games such as through a snake game "I am a brave boy". Through this snake game, besides implanted about sex understanding, it also exercises the ability to communicate children. But such a game is not implemented in our country. Therefore, a module of sexuality health education should be included in the preschool curriculum to help children in this issue.

**Theoretical Framework**



**Methodology**

**Sampling**

A total of 45 preschool teachers participated in this study. They are preschool teachers from the Tanah Merah area of Kelantan, Malaysia. There were 38 (84.4%) women and 7 (15.6%) men with 27 (60%) participants, ages between 36 - 49 years old.

**Intrument**

The data is collected by questionnaire which consists of two parts. Part I and II comprise five-point Likert scale questions. This section is analyzed using the frequency and percentage to obtain the following information:

**Section I** : Profile of Respondents [Preschool Teacher (Ten Items)]

**Section II** : The Importance of Sexuality Education to preschoolers (Forty-five Items)

**Results**

Response from study questions reveals dense information and reflects a set of new themes to answer all research questions.

**Preschool Teacher Perceptions Aspect: Sexual Health Education Can Help Prevent Children from Sexual Abuse or Criminal Behavior Related To Sexuality.**

Participants' responses to the importance of sexuality education to prevent child sexual abuse problems are shown in Table 1 below.

### **The Teaching Form that Teachers Should Use in Teaching Sexuality Health Education.**

Participants' responses to adequate teaching form to teach preschool children are shown in Table 2.

### **The Importance of Parent's Role to Helps the School in the Health Education of Children's Sexuality.**

Participants' responses to the interests of parents involvement in collaboration with the school.

### **The Importance Constructs a Sexuality Health Teaching Module as Guide to Preschool Teachers and Parents.**

Participant's responses to the importance of sexuality health education module to ensure the welfare and safety of preschool children at home, school or in public.

It is crucial for preschool students learn about sexuality health education in order to enhance their knowledge and skills as a safety measure of sexual crimes. A total of 44 participants (97.8%) agreed and strongly agreed that preschoolers should study the subject of sexuality education at school to prevent criminal behavior and sexual abuse. This finding is in conformity with a salient concept in Freud's psychoanalytic theory, the role of Ego that acts to control Id's desire not to derelict the values and norms of society. Therefore, sexuality education helps children gain early exposure to and self-control rather than engaging in unethical activities.

Based on the results, it shows that preschool teachers use two methods in teaching sexuality namely verbal and non-verbal. The viewpoint of the preschool teacher mention that creative and innovative learning approach did facilitates learning session in the classroom. A total of 42 participants (93.4%) agreed that various forms of teaching were important to ensure that preschool children facilely comprehend sexuality education. This supported by with Maslow's Theory of Needs which emphasizes the needs of students who need the protection and compassion from teachers and parents. Therefore, the form of verbal and non-verbal teaching meets the needs of preschool children.

Based on the results, preschool teachers agree that the role of parents is essential in the teaching of sexuality health education. A total of 36 participants (80%) agreed and strongly agreed that in order to continue the continuity sexuality education program, the school and parents should work together. Akhlaq education as stated in the context and theories of Islamic psychology, suggests that children's education should begin with educating parents at home. The role of this parent is also one of the disciplines to guide the epitome of soul in Islamic philosophy called ethics ('ilm al-akhlaq).

Based on the results, it shows that preschool teachers agree on the importance of creating a module of sexuality health education as a guide for children, teachers and parents. A total of 40 participants (88.9%) agreed and strongly agreed that a guideline or module should be provided for children, teachers and parents. The Rational Emotive Therapy (RET) theory used in this study also shows that a guideline should be created because the theory believes that humans are born with a variety of potentials whether good or bad depending on the control and stimuli. Thus, the existence of sexuality education teaching modules acts as domination for children as well as guidelines for teachers as well as parents.

### Discussion

The results of this study are in line with the important concepts in Freud's psychoanalytic theory, the role of Ego that controls Id's desire to not break the values and norms of society. With this sexuality education helps children gain early exposure to sexuality education and self-control rather than engaging in immoral activities. As with Maslow's Theory of Needs, it concerns the needs of students who need the protection of love and compassion from teachers and parents. Therefore, the form of verbal and non verbal teaching meets the needs of preschool children. Academic education as stated in the context and theories of Islamic psychology, suggests that children's education should begin with educating parents at home. The role of this parent is also one of the disciplines to control the soul in Islamic philosophy called ethics ('ilm al-akhlak). While the Rational Emotive Therapy (RET) theory used in this study also shows that a guideline should be created because the theory believes that humans are born with a variety of potentials whether good or bad. It depends on control and stimuli. Thus the study of the importance of sexuality education can be used as a survey of information for teachers and parents. As a general analysis, preschool teachers agree that the topic of sexuality education should be taught to preschoolers. This is likely because pre-school teachers feel that sexuality education is very important to protect children from any form of sexual harassment. Hence, even if these children are still preschoolers, they can be taught about sex education that can help them understand more accurately about their bodies and can act if sexual abuse occurs against them.

### Conclusion

This study was conducted to identify responses from preschool teachers on the importance of sexuality health education to preschool children. The results of these responses helped the researchers to identify the importance of sexuality health education especially to preschoolers. Learning and teaching should be pertinent to the development and needs of children. All aspects such as teacher background, education level and appraisal from preschool teachers on the teaching of sexuality health education in this study should be considered before developing the Sexual Health Education Module.

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