

## Review Of Gender-Responsive Sex Education Material And Methods In The Context Of Islamic Education

Luluk Ifadah <sup>a,1</sup>, Yuni Setya Hartati <sup>b,2\*</sup>, Dea Puji Saputri <sup>c,3</sup> Puput Sukma Ayu Wulandari <sup>d,4</sup> Mohamad Ardin Suwandi <sup>e,5</sup>

<sup>a,b,c,d</sup> Institut Islam nahdlatul Ulama Temanggung, Indonesia

<sup>e</sup> National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University, Russia

<sup>1</sup> [bundaqotrunnada@gmail.com](mailto:bundaqotrunnada@gmail.com); <sup>2</sup> [stainutemanggungyunisetya72@gmail.com](mailto:stainutemanggungyunisetya72@gmail.com) <sup>3</sup> [deapujisaputri@gmail.com](mailto:deapujisaputri@gmail.com) <sup>4</sup> [wulandari010114@gmail.com](mailto:wulandari010114@gmail.com) <sup>5</sup> [mohamad.ardin.suwandi@yandex.ru](mailto:mohamad.ardin.suwandi@yandex.ru)

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### ABSTRACT

The discussion of material and methods for gender-responsive sex education is an important issue within the context of Islamic education, approached with sensitivity to gender differences. This study aims to explore how sex education can be aligned with Islamic teachings that emphasize moral values, ethics, and gender justice. The study finds that the material for sex education in Islamic education must encompass aspects of reproductive health, ethics of inter-gender relationships, and the value of purity in Islamic teachings. Additionally, the teaching methods applied should be sensitive to gender issues, avoiding stereotypes, and providing equal space for both men and women in understanding sexuality. This research also identifies various challenges, such as conservative perceptions in society and the unpreparedness of parents as educators in delivering sex education materials. It can be concluded that, with the appropriate materials and methods, gender-responsive sex education in Islamic education will contribute to the development of individuals who are healthy physically, mentally, and spiritually, while respecting the values of gender equality and justice.

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## Introduction

The challenge faced by society today is the continued existence of a dichotomous view between men and women. Therefore, a concept of equality between the two is needed as a form of partnership with the goal of gaining mutual benefits, particularly in family life, which is the first place where children learn. It is essential to apply a parenting model that involves both parents, mother and father, from an early age, which indirectly teaches children about gender-based parenting patterns (Werdinginsih, 2020).

Currently, many traditional patterns of child-rearing are still encountered, often viewed as the mother's responsibility, especially for housewives. The dominance of the mother's role in parenting leads to the limited involvement of fathers, which in turn creates the "fatherless" stigma that describes the low role of fathers in child-rearing. A balanced and synergistic parenting pattern between the father and mother is an important step that must be developed, but this greatly depends on the development of one's mindset and understanding of religion regarding joint

responsibilities in child-rearing without exception. In the parenting process, parents play a central role in shaping the child's character and building the child's mindset in facing their sexual development. Therefore, an appropriate parenting model that meets both the physiological and psychological needs of the child is needed, so the child can have a strong foundation through the parenting they receive in the family, the first school that greatly influences a child's development (Miftahudin, 2021). The father figure, as the leader of the family and the primary breadwinner, is expected to be a protector, guardian, and role model for the family, especially for the children. In this regard, the father is expected to have *tafaqquh fi al-din*, which is a good understanding of religion, and be able to create a religious atmosphere within the family so that children can grow and develop with spiritual, mental, moral, and social maturity. However, some families still treat children as outlets for their emotional frustration or dissatisfaction (Ramadhani & Nurwati, 2022).

Today, it is important to note that the close relationship children have with the digital world provides them with extraordinary access to various things, including creating counterproductive conditions. Children are now vulnerable to gadget addiction, excessive use of social media, and easy access to pornography and sexual violence content. This makes them susceptible to being either perpetrators or victims of sexual violence. Sexual violence is a serious issue that concerns the nation and requires special attention from all parties, especially parents, to provide appropriate sex education that aligns with the child's age stage.

Therefore, a proper method of delivery is needed so that children feel comfortable and are able to take responsibility for the development and growth of their sexual organs. The appropriateness of the sex education methods provided by parents will impact the accuracy of the child's sexual understanding based on the education they receive, including when they become students at Islamic boarding schools (Munawwaroh & Zafi, 2021).

Sex education in the family is crucial, considering the development of the world related to sexual deviations, driven by globalization, in addition to improper parenting due to the lack of parents' knowledge about education in the family, including sex education for children. In Muslim families, this effort can shape an Islamic perspective in providing sex education to children, both at an early age and at the age of *taklif/baligh* (Martini, 2017).

The lack of studies on sex education from an Islamic perspective in society is caused by two factors. First, there is a misconception that sexual preparation for children should only be done after they reach puberty. Second, there is a lack of moral sensitivity toward sex education, which is often considered a taboo topic. In Islam, sexuality is viewed as a natural and instinctive urge, so it needs to be controlled and channeled in the proper way, namely through marriage (Martini, 2017).

Considering the importance of the father's role in the child's growth and development, the father figure must be actively and intensively involved in providing parenting, especially in sex education, which has traditionally been delegated to the mother. The father's role in sex education faces various challenges, as child sexual education is generally dominated by the mother. The lack of awareness among fathers to provide sex education to children becomes one of the biggest challenges, as many fathers focus more on meeting the family's economic needs and leave the parenting responsibilities to their wives, without making a significant contribution to the child's sex education.

## Method

This study employs a library research method, which is a research approach that utilizes literary sources as the foundation for data and information. The data is collected through the processes of gathering, reviewing, and analyzing relevant literature, focusing on the content and methods of sexual education parenting from the perspective of Islamic education. The stages of this method include collecting relevant literature, such as books, journals, and previous research documents, to ensure validity, relevance, and alignment with Islamic education. The analysis is conducted using a descriptive-analytical approach, examining the content and methods of sexual education parenting based on the principles of Islamic education. This method aims to integrate various perspectives and theories to produce a systematic understanding and theoretical guidance regarding the content and methods of sexual education parenting in Islam

## Result and Discussion

### 1. Results

The growth and development process in children is important and requires serious attention and handling, including involving the father's role in it. This is due to several reasons, including:

- a. The growth and development process in children has a specific, limited/short timeframe.
- b. The child's organs have not fully developed.
- c. The child's ability to adapt has not been tested and trained.
- d. The child cannot be independent yet and still needs to learn a lot.
- e. The process yields broad results (outputs) and has long-term impacts (outcomes) (Directorate of Family Development for Toddlers and Children, 2019).

In psychoanalytic theory, it is emphasized that sexual development begins in childhood, through various stages. These stages are crucial in shaping a person's personality, including how they perceive sexuality. Therefore, the role of parents is critical in guiding children through these stages of sexual development, with the goal of shaping a healthy and positive character (Kwirinus, 2022).

Human sexual development starts in childhood, a period when sexual urges already emerge and demand fulfillment. Therefore, sex education should be introduced as early as possible to ensure the child's development is in harmony with their age. Sexual activity in childhood tends to be for self-pleasure. It is better that before puberty, this pleasure is not only directed towards themselves but also toward objects outside themselves, such as same-sex or opposite-sex peers. For them, feelings of love are inseparable from sexuality (Kwirinus, 2022).

During puberty, the child's sexual life is organized and coordinated in two directions. On one hand, all instincts are under control (the genital zone), and thus, sexual life is primarily

directed towards reproduction, with the satisfaction of other instincts being seen as preparation and encouragement for intercourse (Kwirinus, 2022). This is in line with what Isnatul (2018) stated, that the development of the modern world and easy access to digital content has made it impossible for children to ignore sexual behavior. Children and adolescents can easily access pornography and explicit sexual content.

Sex education is an effort to direct children's desires, tendencies, and behaviors towards a positive direction from an early age, as this will influence the formation of their personality in the future. When a child's desires and tendencies emerge, proper sex education will help the child determine and take responsibility for the attitudes they will adopt. Sex education is a long and continuous process conducted by educators. The education provided must be adjusted to the child's development, as a misunderstanding of sexuality can lead to the acceptance of incorrect information. Many children end up seeking knowledge about sexuality from unreliable sources (Sakinah, 2020).

Therefore, parents/educators should speak the truth about sexuality by considering the situation and the developmental stages of the child. In addition, sex education also requires role models from the educators (Muarifah, Soesilo, and Tagela, 2019). Sex education involves knowledge and values about genetic physical traits and the functions of gender (sex) for both boys and girls, so that children gain an understanding of physical and hormonal growth as well as the process of maturation. This allows children to identify harmful and dangerous situations and understand how to ask for help and report suspicious activities related to their sexuality. The key points of sex education that fathers can implement include: first, instilling a sense of modesty in children, and second, instilling masculinity in boys and femininity in girls (Sofiani, Mufika, and Mufaro'ah, 2020).

Synergy in gender-responsive sexual education parenting for children has a significant impact on the structure and dynamics of parenting within families, including:

- a. The quality of parent-child interaction in sexual education establishes a strong foundation for children to develop a healthy and responsible perspective on sexuality. It also engages parents in their child's maturation process in a positive and educational manner (Retnaningrum, 2024).
- b. The division of parenting responsibilities, even when parents are working, faces challenges related to time and energy management in caregiving. Many families strive to balance work and personal life through efficient time management and utilizing social support such as extended family or services (Nofianti & Sumarno, 2023).
- c. Children who receive gender-responsive affection can enhance their academic abilities and social activities (Ilham, 2021).
- d. The development of children's achievement motivation, social skills, maturity, and ability to interact with others (Yusiyaka & Safitri, 2020).

## 2. Discussion

Based on the explanation above, the discussion in this study includes:

### a. Gender-Responsive Sex Education Parenting Materials

The general materials on gender-responsive sex education that can be provided by fathers in child-rearing can be conveyed through several types of content. In general, the materials that can be delivered include:

#### 1) Puberty

The word "puberty" comes from Latin, meaning the age of maturity (Hurlock, 1990),

and refers to the physical changes and behavioral transformations that occur when an individual reaches sexual maturity and becomes capable of reproduction. In childhood, the sexual organs of boys and girls are not active because the glands controlling them (the hypothalamus and pituitary) are not yet functioning. As they enter sexual maturity, the hypothalamus becomes active and stimulates the pituitary gland to produce hormones that trigger the production of sex hormones in the ovaries (for girls) and the testes (for boys). The period during which the ovaries and testes produce these hormones is called puberty, where the sexual organs begin to function.

## 2) Human Reproductive System

The human reproductive system is a group of organs that work together to enable sexual activity and reproduction. The main function of this system is to facilitate sexual activity, where the reproductive organs allow sexual intercourse between men and women, and to produce offspring, where the reproductive system enables fertilization and pregnancy, ultimately leading to birth. Understanding the anatomy and function of reproductive organs is very important. These organs play a crucial role in human reproduction. The male reproductive organs include the testes, penis, vas deferens, seminal vesicles, prostate, bulbourethral glands, and urethra, while the female reproductive organs include the ovaries, fallopian tubes, uterus, vagina, and vulva. Studying the anatomy and function of reproductive organs helps in understanding the human reproductive process, preventing and addressing reproductive health issues, and making informed decisions about sexual and reproductive health.

## 3) Contraception

Understanding contraception contributes to preparing teenagers, especially for future family life. Contraception refers to methods that use scientific knowledge to prevent pregnancy. With knowledge of contraception, adolescents are expected to make responsible decisions related to sexual and reproductive health, prevent unwanted pregnancies, and prepare themselves to become parents in the future.

## 4) Menstruation and Wet Dreams

Menstruation begins with the maturation of the egg cells in the ovaries, triggered by stimulation from the pituitary gland in the brain. For about 14 days, the mature egg attempts to be released from the ovary and move toward the uterus, ready for fertilization. If not fertilized, the egg and uterine lining will shed, and this is called menstruation. Wet dreams generally occur in teenage boys between the ages of 9 and 14, signaling the start of sperm production in the testes. This natural release of sperm fluid generally happens periodically, about every 2-3 weeks. Wet dreams are an indicator that the male reproductive organs have started functioning and that puberty has been reached.

## 5) Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), also known as venereal diseases, are one of the consequences of unhealthy sexual activity. This type of sexual activity can lead to various infectious diseases, some of which can endanger health.

## 6) Ethics of Sex Education During Puberty

At the puberty stage, ethical teachings become very important as they relate to daily behaviors that will shape a child's habits. These ethical lessons, as outlined by Abdulloh Nashih Ulwan, include: ethics of asking permission, ethics of looking, how to avoid sexual stimulation, teaching teenagers about Islamic laws related to adolescence

and adulthood, marriage and sexual relationships, *isti'faf* (preserving personal dignity) for those not yet able to marry, and explaining sex to teenagers openly (Zulaiha, 2019).

## **b. Methods of Gender-Responsive Sexual Education Parenting**

### **1) Reward and Consequences Method**

Reward is positive reinforcement, where something is given to increase behavior. Meanwhile, positive consequences (negative reinforcement) are intended to increase behavior, appearing when someone follows rules, while consequences are penalties that occur when rules are broken. The use of behavioral consequences, such as reinforcers and punishers, in managing children's behavior requires teachers to follow certain principles for these consequences to work effectively. Human behavior can be influenced by stimuli or the environment. The application of Behaviorist theory in classroom management involves providing rewards and positive consequences (Abidin 2022).

- a) The goals of giving rewards to children include (Miftahuddin 2022):
  - a. Increasing children's attention
  - b. Easing the learning process for children
  - c. Stimulating and maintaining children's motivation
  - d. Controlling and changing counterproductive learning behavior towards more productive learning behaviors
  - e. Managing and developing students in their learning
  - f. Encouraging critical thinking
  - g. Strengthening positive behavior

Principles for parents in giving rewards (Anwar and Harmi 2011) include:

- a) Warmth and enthusiasm in giving rewards so that children can feel the warmth and enthusiasm of educators effectively, through voice, facial expressions, and body language.
- b) The meaningfulness of the reward given reasonably, meaning the reward is given because the student has achieved something through their own effort (focused on effort).
- c) Instilling honesty in children who have earned rewards through their own work, not someone else's.
- d) Avoiding negative responses such as insults, teasing, harshness, sarcasm, cursing, and so on.
- e) Varying the types of rewards given and not sticking to just one.
- f) Rewarding immediately when students do something correct, without delay.

### **2) The film screening method**

involves using learning media such as a laptop and projector to show films related to the material. This method is easily accepted in teaching as students can experience visual learning through sight and non-visual learning through hearing. Additionally, this method makes it easier for students to understand the lesson material, as they can see concrete examples of what is being studied (Dasilva et al. 2019).

### **3) Habituation Method**

The habituation method is implemented by both parents and teachers by incorporating sexual education practices into the daily routines of children, especially while they are at school. This approach can have a positive and lasting impact on children by shaping their attitudes (Afifah, Utomo, and Azizah, 2022).

#### **4) Role Modeling Method**

The role modeling method, known as *uswah hasanah*, involves educators providing good examples or role models in applying sexual education materials, both at home and during classroom learning. By setting a good example, the educational goals can be achieved optimally (Chailani, 2019).

#### **5) Storytelling Method**

The storytelling method is an effective approach for sex education at home. This method is effective because children enjoy storytelling (Aini and Irsyad 2023).

#### **6) Dialogue Method**

The dialogue method can enhance learning activities, but it should also be paired with discussion activities and assignments to ensure meaning is gained (Muhayati 2016) on a topic being discussed, especially related to hormonal development and the physical and mental changes children experience during their sexual development.

#### **7) Demonstration Method**

The demonstration method is effectively used for sex education at home, providing clear demonstrations on body part recognition, body hygiene, and other related topics. This method uses demonstrations to clarify concepts or show how to do something to children (Sumirah et al. 2023).

#### **8) Role-playing Method**

The role-playing method emphasizes student participation in role-playing or drama activities by mimicking various situations. The purpose of role-playing is to explore students' feelings; transfer and express their views on behavior, values, and perceptions; develop problem-solving skills and behavior; and explore lessons in a different way (Mardiani and Yetti 2020). This condition will certainly help children gain a deeper understanding of sexuality knowledge and how to protect themselves from external factors (Ari Putra 2024).

These various methods can be combined to develop the best potential in children. Parents must provide sex education to their children. This education can be delivered through a variety of methods tailored to the children's needs and characteristics (Magta and Ni Putu 2022).

### **c. Islamic Perspective on Gender-Responsive Sexual Education Content**

Sexual education in Islam begins with the understanding that sexuality is part of human nature (*fitrah*) bestowed by Allah. Both men and women are created with equal rights and responsibilities in maintaining and preserving their bodies and honor. This education emphasizes the importance of understanding the body, reproductive health, and the physical changes that occur during puberty.

Puberty is a critical stage for all adolescents, both boys and girls. During this period, a transition from childhood to adulthood occurs, including hormonal, physical, psychological, and social changes. A child who has experienced menstruation or wet dreams is required to

perform *thaharah* (ritual purification) in Islam (Sholeh 2024).

In the Islamic perspective, men and women hold equal positions in terms of rights and responsibilities, including sexuality. Gender-responsive sexual education emphasizes that both men and women have the right to know and understand their sexual health, as well as the right to protection from sexual violence and harassment. This education also teaches that interactions between men and women should be based on mutual respect, honor, and avoiding actions that contradict Islamic teachings.

Islam is a religion with noble and virtuous goals, aiming to bring happiness to all creation (Rahmatan lil'alam). Its teachings do not discriminate based on gender, as both men and women are valued equally in terms of their piety and devotion to Allah SWT. Furthermore, Islam condemns violence against women as a reprehensible act that contradicts Sharia law. Sexual violence refers to any non-consensual sexual act, regardless of whether the perpetrator has a relationship with the victim or is a colleague. Women often become victims due to societal views that consider them weaker and less capable than men. Unfortunately, this perspective leads people to behave poorly toward women, including committing actions such as rape or assault (A et al. 2023).

Therefore, family-based parenting synergy is needed as part of the gender-responsive mission, involving fathers in the upbringing of children. In Islam, the involvement of fathers in gender-responsive sexual education is vital because Islam emphasizes the role of parents, especially fathers, in educating their children with love, wisdom, and fairness. Fathers have the responsibility to teach their children about religious values, morals, and ethics, including sexuality and gender equality (Dkk 2024).

#### **d. Gender-Responsive Sexual Education Methods in the Islamic Educational Perspective**

In gender-responsive sexual education, it is important to create an open dialogue space between parents, educators, and children. This method involves two-way communication, where children can ask questions and discuss sensitive topics with educators or parents without fear or shame. This open dialogue should be conducted in a way that is sensitive to the child's age and understanding.

In Islam, the family is considered the first school (*madrasah*) for children. Therefore, gender-responsive sexual education must start within the family, with parents as the primary role models. Parents, especially fathers and mothers, should set an example in their behavior and gradually teach religious values related to sexuality, in accordance with the child's age.

The method of teaching through example is very important in gender-responsive sexual education. Parents, particularly fathers, should collaborate with mothers as educators who demonstrate behavior that aligns with Islamic values, such as mutual respect between men and women and maintaining etiquette in interactions. Children tend to imitate the behavior of adults, so good role models will have a positive impact on their understanding of sexuality (Amri Azhari, Endin Mujahidin 2020).

In Islam, teaching should be done with love and empathy. Parents and educators must teach sexual education in a gentle approach, avoiding harshness or judgment, while providing accurate understanding with full consideration for the feelings and circumstances of the child. This creates a strong emotional bond and helps the child feel comfortable discussing sensitive topics.

The method of storytelling, particularly using stories from the lives of prophets or Islamic figures, can be used to teach values about modesty, maintaining honor, and the importance of self-control regarding sexuality. These stories can also serve as examples of proper behavior in maintaining sexual ethics. Therefore, it is necessary to approach education with an understanding of Islamic jurisprudence and religious knowledge related to Islamic laws concerning marriage, the relationship between spouses, and appropriate ways to lead a sexual life according to religious teachings (Sex and Character 2024).

## Conclusion

The content and methods of gender-responsive sexual education from the Islamic educational perspective integrate an understanding of sexuality with religious values that uphold equality and gender roles fairly, without neglecting the moral and ethical principles taught in Islam. Gender-responsive sexual education in the Islamic perspective combines physical, emotional, and moral aspects, emphasizing equality, respect, and self-control in accordance with religious teachings. The content and methods applied must be sensitive to the child's needs and tailored to their age and developmental stage, with religious values as the main foundation for teaching sexual education.

Islam teaches that parenting is not only the mother's responsibility but also the father's, aiming to raise children who are virtuous, knowledgeable, and able to contribute positively to society. This is exemplified in the stories of how the prophets raised their children, which are more dominantly narrated in the Qur'an compared to the role of mothers in child-rearing.

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