

## Parenting on Sexuality by Razitasham Safii

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### INTRODUCTION

This literature work explores into the way parents convey knowledge and guidance on matters of sexuality to their children in a manner that is approachable and aligned with contemporary societal paradigms. The details about sexual and reproductive health among adolescents presented a complex challenge, wherein the dynamic between parents and their children plays a pivotal role in effectively communicating such information, thereby enabling their children to make well-informed decisions. This book authored by Professor Dr. Razitasham Safii, a knowledgeable academic and esteemed expert in public health, particularly in the domain of family health within Sarawak, this book derives from her tenure as a lecturer at the Department of Community Medicine and Public Health, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. Dr. Razitasham's significant contributions to the public health knowledge, specifically relating to family health in the Sarawak region, highlight the complexity of knowledge included in this publication. Comprehensive in its scope, this book precisely addresses variety issues of children's and adolescent's sexual and reproductive health (SRH), delineated across ten chapters that mention various relevant issues. This book functioning as a beacon for parental guidance not only explains effective strategies for addressing contemporary sexual topics with children and teenagers, but also extends actionable insights aimed at safeguarding their child's dignity and self-respect.

In the first chapter, titled "Why Sexuality", the discussion centres on the essential nature of engaging children in conversations about sexuality. Within the modern setting, there persists a prevailing hesitancy among parents to raise this subject matter, considering it is a taboo within familial or societal discourse. The usual predominant perception in the public domain views about "sex" as unsuitable, sensitive, and loaded with controversy, advancing misconceptions and misinterpretations due to its taboo nature. This chapter features the basis that adolescents often navigate their sexual novelty through experiential learning, which characterised by a process of trial and error. Furthermore, this chapter illustrates diverse themes including the anatomical and physiological aspects of male and female reproductive organs, reveals the complexities of sexual and reproductive health, explores the biological process that associated with sexual actions, and anticipates the connection of religion, morality, knowledge, and practices promoting self-respect. Notably, the chapter comprehensively addresses

gender identity, encompassing the roles, personalities, and responsibilities linked to masculinity and femininity. Additionally, an emphasis is placed on clarifying complex challenges concerning adolescent sexuality, particularly prevalent issues like underage rape, teenage pregnancy, occurrence of abandoned babies, the insidious nature of child grooming, and the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV. These societal incidents further compound parental hesitation, prompting a heightened unease regarding the optimal approach to educating their children on matters of sexuality as they navigate the phase of adolescence.

The subsequent chapter within this publication examines into the discourse of “Sexuality at Birth”, dedicating its focus to explaining the biological foundations of gender differentiation. This chapter meticulously navigates through the details of biology of the sexes, unravelling the complexities of chromosomes, dispelling antiquated myths prevalent in historical narratives, and explicating the implications arising from abnormalities such as the presence of fewer or additional chromosomes. In essence, this chapter constitutes a detailed description on human biology, offering important insights for parents to equip themselves with fundamental knowledge in guiding their children through the basic of SRH.

The third chapter of this book delves into the sophisticated topic of “Gender Development”, placing major importance on the socio-psychological evolution of a child. This section thoroughly examines the behavioural patterns showed by children during their childhood, probing the extent to which gender influences the shaping of their personalities, preferences, and conduct. It analyses the societal constructs surrounding what is deemed normal or unusual in terms of gender-related attributes and actions. Moreover, this chapter illustrates upon the diverse methodologies employed in childbirth, aiming to fill parents with an awareness of the variety of approaches available. This discourse seeks to highlight the intrinsic value and sanctity of each birth, symbolising life itself. Additionally, this chapter distinguished the concepts of sex and gender, explaining that sex describes biological characteristics such as male and female, while gender pertains to a socially constructed belief system dictating attire, acts, and behaves based on their biological attributes. Furthermore, this segment explores into contemporary issues which covers gender dysphoria and matters concerning LGBT which shows an emerging trend that necessitate parental awareness and preparedness in addressing such behavioural tendencies among their children. Therefore, it highlights the necessary measures for parents to acquire such knowledge to facilitate the holistic development of their children, nurturing their mental and physical well-being.

The subsequent chapter outlines “Puberty Changes”, explaining the physical and psychological transformations experienced by teenagers during developmental stage. It provides guidance for parents on supporting their adolescent children during puberty. This book serves as a preparatory guide for parents, equipping them to talk to their children’s inquiries about puberty in the future. The following chapters give further details about adolescent growth which the first one is “Early Adolescent Sexuality” marks the period of rapid growth between ages 10 to 14, “Middle Adolescent Sexuality”, signifies the noticeable physical changes associated with puberty, and “Late Adolescent Sexuality”, signifies a phase where children gain autonomy from family control and shaping their self-identity before entering adulthood. Each phase involves diverse strategies for parents in understanding, educating, and nurturing positive SRH information among their children.

In this book, there is a pivotal chapter for parental guidance regarding the education of their adolescent children on matters pertaining to sexuality and comprehensive care of their SRH. This chapter mentioned about the sexual cycle and emphasising to mitigate occurrences of premarital sexual activity. Considering the significance of sex within the context of marriage, sexual activity contributes

to individual's mental and physical wellbeing. This section encompasses the mechanisms underlying the sexual cycle and defines the roles and responsibilities of parents in preventing occurrences of premarital sexual intercourse among adolescents. Moreover, an additional chapter dedicated to "Safe Touch" is a worth mentioning inclusion within this book. This section highlights the cruciality for parents to determine and convey the understanding that every physical interaction involves an emotional sense, distinguishing between what constitutes a positive, nurturing touch and a potentially harmful or inappropriate one.

In summary, this book serves a parental guide in delivering knowledge on sexuality and fostering responsible management of SRH. Its primary purpose is to enhance the dignity of children while empowering them to make informed health decisions for themselves and future generations. The author emphasises the important role of parents in providing sex education, highlighting that this instruction is not just limited to schools but also be effectively conveyed within the family setting, depending upon parents acquired appropriate knowledge. Additionally, community involvement is important in circulating self-care information, particularly concerning sexuality and SRH especially among adolescents. Despite societal taboos surrounding the discussion of sex and sexuality, the book advocates that through education and appropriate communication, a morally and physically-sound future generation can be nurtured.

## **REFERENCE**

Safii, R. (2023). *Parenting On Sexuality*. UNIMAS Publisher.