



A Culturally-Sensitive Approach to Sexual and Reproductive Health Education: A Critical Review of a Parenting Sexuality Book

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 26 December 2024
Received in revised form 12 January 2025
Accepted 26 February 2025
Available online 15 March 2025

Keywords:

Sexual and reproductive health;
parenting sexuality; book review

ABSTRACT

Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) education has become increasingly critical in contemporary society, with reports of child sexual and physical abuse appearing almost weekly in mainstream media. The current generation of parents, who were raised in environments where discussions about sexuality were relatively private and infrequent, now face the challenge of addressing these issues with their teenage children. Consequently, there is a pressing need to raise awareness and equip parents with the necessary skills for effective communication about SRH. This review examines the book "Berbual-bual dengan Anak tentang Seksualiti (BBDATS)" by Wan Nur Syakira Wan Musa, analyzing its content, purpose, and relevance. The book uniquely integrates Islamic perspectives, which is essential for addressing the needs of Malaysia's predominantly Muslim population. It ensures the content respects cultural and religious norms while promoting effective SRH education. The book features 18 engaging chapters, employing various techniques such as dialogue, highlights, Q&A sections, checklists, and step-by-step guides, making it relevant and accessible. By skillfully linking Islamic knowledge sources, such as the Quran and Hadith, with practical storytelling methods, the book helps readers connect fundamental life principles with the technical skills needed for effective communication. This review highlights the valuable insights provided by BBDATS, suggesting that benchmarking its best practices can enhance SRH education initiatives.

1. Introduction

Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) education has become increasingly critical to address in contemporary society. Reports of child sexual and physical abuse appear almost weekly in national media [1]. The current generation of parents with teenage children were raised in environments where discussions about sexuality were relatively private and infrequent [2]. Consequently, there is

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a pressing need to raise awareness and equip parents with the skills necessary to effectively discuss these issues with their children [3]. One effective method for conveying this knowledge and skill is through the use of educational reference books. This review examines the book "Berbual-bual dengan Anak tentang Seksualiti (BBDATS)" by Syakira [4], aiming to provide an analysis of its content, purpose, and relevance. The unique integration of Islamic perspectives in this book is essential for addressing the needs of the predominantly Muslim population in Malaysia, ensuring the content respects cultural and religious norms while promoting effective Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) education, as suggested by Agyei [5]. In Malaysia, numerous references on sexual and reproductive health (SRH) are available, primarily targeting adolescent readers. However, there is a noticeable gap in resources designed to guide parents in effectively communicating this information to their children, particularly those aged 7–12 years. Consequently, this BBDATS book provides a comprehensive review of a resource addressing this critical issue.

2. Methodology

2.1 Selection and Review Checklist

This case study examines BBDATS by Wan Nur Syakira Wan Musa [4], a pivotal resource addressing the critical yet underexplored domain of parent-child communication about sexuality. BBDATS by Wan Nur Syakira Wan Musa [4] has been selected for several reasons. Firstly, there is a notable scarcity of resources that provide comprehensive technical guidance on effectively communicating about sexuality with children. While numerous books touch upon the topic of sexual education, few offer practical strategies and guidance tailored specifically to parents seeking to engage in these conversations with their children [6]. Furthermore, Wan Nur Syakira's book stands out for its unique focus on integrating Islamic perspectives into the discussion of sexuality [4]. In a predominantly Muslim country like Malaysia, where cultural and religious norms heavily influence societal attitudes towards sexuality, this integration is particularly significant [7]. By addressing the needs of Muslim families and respecting their cultural and religious sensitivities, BBDATS fills a crucial gap in the available literature on sexual education.

BBDATS achieved significant success, selling 1500 copies in its first printing across Malaysia. On May 10, 2024, the book was awarded the "Dana Pembelian Terus dari Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia" ("Direct Purchase Grant from the National Library of Malaysia"), further expanding its popularity among parents. Wan Nur Syakira's interest in writing parenting books that integrate Islamic values is evident in this well-received work. The book is presented in a soft cover format, A5 in size, with full-coloured pages, making it visually appealing and engaging for readers. The thoughtful design and quality presentation underscore the book's importance as a resource for parents seeking to address sexuality with their children in an informed and value-centric manner.

The critical review of BBDATS was conducted utilizing a book appraisal worksheet and the guidelines proposed by Lee *et al.*, [8]. These guidelines were developed through their comprehensive literature review, which synthesized several existing frameworks for performing book reviews. This book has been granted permission for use in research purposes (critical review) by its publisher, Karya Bestari Sdn Bhd, through a written request dated December 14, 2023. Before the review commenced, approval for ethical considerations was sought from the International Islamic University Malaysia Research Ethics Committee (IIUM-REC) IIUM/504/14/11/2/IREC 2022-228 on 9 January 2023, and the IIUM-Kulliyyah of Nursing Postgraduate and Research Committee IIUM/313/14/3/1 dated 26 October 2022.

2.2 Specification of the Book

BBDATS published by Karya Bestari Sdn. Bhd. in Shah Alam, Selangor and can be found in most local bookstores as well as online platforms like Shopee. The International Standard Book Number (ISBN) for this publication is 978-967-86-1020-9. The primary aim of the book is to equip parents with the skills and confidence needed to discuss sexuality openly and effectively. By doing so, it seeks to create an environment of trust and openness within the family, ensuring children receive accurate and value-based information. This chapter will examine how author addresses this often-sensitive subject, bridging the communication gap between parents and children, and promoting healthier and more informed discussions about sexuality.

3. Findings

3.1 Content

This book contains 18 engaging chapters. Some chapter titles are presented using question techniques in specific situations, sparking curiosity to understand deeper into the topics. The 18 chapters in this book cover five dimensions of sexuality education: biological, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual. The following is the list of the chapters in this book:

Table 1

Content of the book

Chapter	Title
1	<i>Pendidikan seksualiti bukan daripada Islam?</i>
2	Connection before correction
3	<i>Kenapa tanya soalan begitu?</i>
4	<i>Boleh ke cium bibir anak?</i>
5	<i>Jujur dengan nama alat sulit</i>
6	<i>Malu azimat berharga</i>
7	<i>Kenapa lepas nikah dapat anak?</i>
8	<i>Bahaya soft pornography kepada anak</i>
9	<i>Gajet "tangan kedua" mendidik anak</i>
10	<i>Jangan lengah asingkan tempat tidur</i>
11	<i>Toilet training pun ada kaitan dengan pendidikan seksualiti</i>
12	<i>Adik-beradik mandi bersama?</i>
13	<i>Normalkah anak suka bermain dengat zakar?</i>
14	<i>Kenapa ummi tak solat?</i>
15	<i>Santuni anak lelaki melalui fasa akil baligh</i>
16	<i>LGBT ancaman anak generasi kini</i>
17	Child sexual grooming is real
18	<i>Apa yang perlu dibuat jika anak terjebak dengan pornografi/seksual?</i>

3.2 Technical Features

The book features several intriguing technical elements worth exploring. This book was written in the Malay language to cater to the majority demographic in Malaysia, which comprises Malay Muslims. It skillfully integrates Islamic knowledge sources, such as the Quran and Hadith, with engaging storytelling techniques, including dialogue, highlights, Q&A sections, checklists, and step-by-step guides. This thoughtful combination makes the book highly relevant and aids readers in linking fundamental life principles with the practical technical skills required for effective communication.

3.2.1 Usage of Quranic verses

Integrating religious texts provides a culturally and spiritually relevant context, enhancing the credibility and acceptance of the content among Muslim readers. The author extensively utilizes verses from the Quran that coincide with the messages being conveyed. Among the selected verses presented by the author at the beginning of the book is about the characteristics of a believer, taken from Surah Al-Mukminun [23]. This verse narrates the criteria of inhabitants of paradise and its relation to the practice of preserving one's dignity. In page 73, the author also employs Quranic verses while elucidating the concept and process of human creation. As we know, the creation of humans is a crucial topic when discussing reproduction. Similarly, when the author relates to verse 222 in Surah Al-Baqarah (Figure 1), which narrates the menstrual cycle of women and the prohibition for a husband to engage in intercourse with his wife during her menstruation due to cleanliness factors [23]. This illustrates that Islam has provided fundamental guidelines for this Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) education [9].

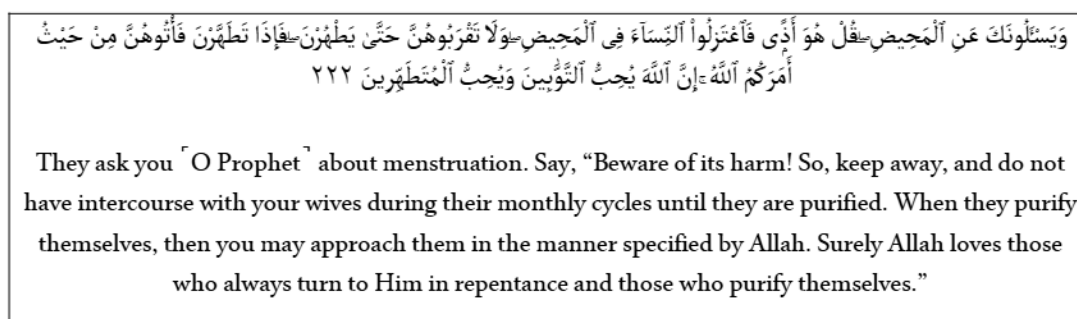


Fig. 1. The use of Quran verse

3.2.2 Usage of hadith

The use of hadith is prevalent throughout this book. Hadith, which are the recorded sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), play a significant role in the text. The author references a hadith on page nine when initiating the discussion on the feeling of love [4]. This hadith is used to explain physical touch in understanding children's love languages. On page 53, the author relates a hadith about modesty when beginning the discussion on feelings of shame. On pages 96 and 122, the author cites a hadith (Figure 2) regarding one of the main principles in sexual education: the separation of children's sleeping places from their parents and the prohibition of sharing the same blanket. Additionally, on page 125, the author discusses a hadith that addresses the concept and benefits of circumcision [4].

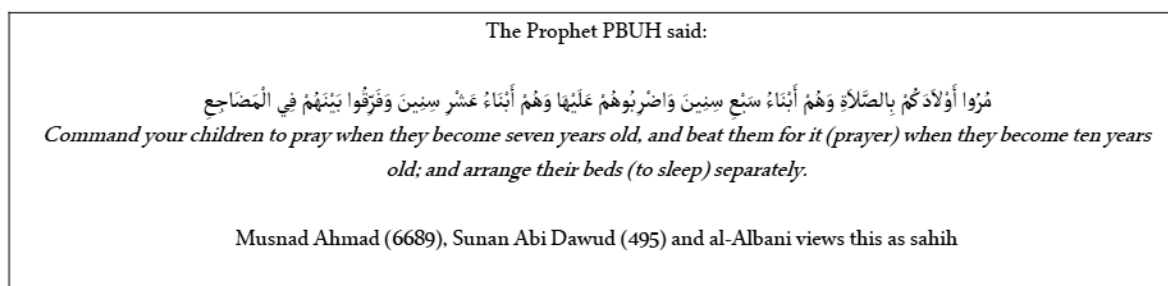


Fig. 2. The use of hadith

3.2.3 Usage of dialog

One of the intriguing elements highlighted by the author in this book is the use of dialogue (Figure 3). This technique is particularly effective for a technical book, as it allows parents to directly apply the information. From pages 60 to 71, the author employs dialogue between a child and a mother to discuss the birthing process. Similarly, on pages 120 and 121, dialogue is used to guide parents on how to respond when their son inquires about his erections. On page 127, dialogue is again utilized to explain to parents how to educate their sons about genital care. Likewise, pages 133 and 134 employ dialogue to elucidate the menstrual process experienced by women. It is evident that the use of dialogue is prominent when addressing the subject of genitals, a topic that is infrequently discussed by parents. By presenting practical dialogues, the book provides parents with a model for effectively communicating with their children [4].

Ummi: "Jom anak-anak, kita tidur."
Adam: "Anak tu apa, Ummi?"
Ummi: "Anak ummi tu Adam dan Yusuf lah. Kan dulu Adam dan Yusuf duduk dalam rahim ummi. Lepas tu, ummi lahirkan Adam ikut faraj, jadilah Adam anak ummi. Ummi besarkan Adam, jaga, sayang Adam."

Saya sambung bertanya.

Ummi: "Dulu ummi kandungkan Adam dalam apa?"
Adam: "Rahim?"

Fig. 3. The Use of question and answer

3.2.4 Usage of step-by-step guides

Although limited in number, the use of step-by-step guides in this book is highly effective for elucidating specific processes. These guides offer clear, actionable instructions, making it easier for readers to implement the advice in real-life situations (Figure 4). For instance, the author employs a step-by-step technique to explain how to set screen time limits for children's use of phones and iPads on pages 92 and 93. In the same page, the author also provides steps on how to block access to the Roblox application for children [4]. In my opinion, this technique is excellent and should be expanded to include settings for other applications that could negatively impact children's mental development. Other topics that could be expanded include how to block certain websites from being accessed by parents, as well as step-by-step guides on using Google's Family Link application.

- Ajarkan anak-anak dengan simulasi ini.
1. Ketuk pintu bilik ahli keluarga dengan ketukan sederhana. Ibu atau ayah tunjukkan cara mengetuk pintu.
 2. Ibu ayah memberikan bantuan fizikal ketika mengajar. Pegang tangan anak-anak, kepalkan dan ketuk.
 3. Berikan salam, "Assalamualaikum" dan sebut nama meskipun hanya untuk masuk bilik sahaja.
 4. Tanya, "Boleh saya nak masuk?" Bila ahli keluarga memberi keizinan, barulah anak-anak boleh masuk ke dalam bilik tersebut. Jika setelah diketuk tiga kali dan pintu masih belum dibuka, tinggalkan dahulu dan datanglah semula kerana mungkin orang di dalam belum bersedia.

Fig. 4. The use of step-by-step guide

3.2.5 Usage of checklists to emphasize important issues

In this book, the author employs checklists to emphasize important points that parents need to be aware of when discussing sexuality with their children. For instance, on page 138, a checklist is used to explain the preparations parents should make for their daughters' experiences during menstruation. Towards the end of the book, on pages 176 to 178, checklists are also utilized to summarize topics related to sexuality that need to be discussed with children according to their age groups [4]. Checklists highlight key points and ensure that readers do not overlook critical information, thereby aiding in comprehension and retention.

3.2.6 Usage of question and answer

The use of question and answer (Q&A) sections in this book provides a refreshing perspective by effectively highlighting the real-world aspects of parenting. Several Q&A sections are utilized by the author throughout the book. For instance, on page 36, the author addresses a parent's question about whether it is appropriate to kiss their child on the lips. On page 65, a Q&A section explains why a couple might have children after marriage. Additionally, on page 115, there is a Q&A that discusses whether it is permissible for children to bathe together. The inclusion of Q&A sections aligns well with the topics discussed and presents examples of common questions parents might have [4].

4. Discussions

One of the unique aspects of this book is the author's ability to address sensitive and difficult topics with a relaxed and approachable narrative style. A relaxed approach in delivering a complex issue is important because it makes it easier for readers to understand the key message the author wants to convey without feeling overwhelmed or burdened. This approach uses a more friendly and approachable language style, which helps present difficult information in a lighter, more accessible way [10,11]. Additionally, its content is dense yet practical, making each page highly worthwhile for readers to peruse. This book is particularly beneficial for parents who are beginning to build confidence in communicating with their children aged 12 and under. In a context where there are few books in Malaysia that tackle these issues technically for a Muslim readership, this book stands out. Furthermore, the book is unique in providing clear boundaries for discussing sexuality with children, in a situation where parents are still confused about making quick and spontaneous decisions in choosing topics and content for discussions about SRH [12].

The use of Quranic verses and Hadith in writing a book about parenting and sexuality is essential to provide an authentic Islamic framework for guidance [13]. Parenting and sexuality are sensitive topics, and aligning them with Islamic teachings ensures the content adheres to divine principles [14]. Quranic and Hadith references enhance the book's credibility, particularly among Muslim readers seeking advice rooted in their faith. These references also help address cultural and religious sensitivities, ensuring the discussions resonate with the values and beliefs of the intended audience [15]. Additionally, by grounding the content in primary Islamic sources, the book can guide parents in making ethical and practical decisions on topics such as modesty, relationships, and reproductive health. This approach not only fosters community acceptance but also underscores that discussing sexuality within an Islamic context is both appropriate and necessary for responsible parenting [16].

This book also successfully addresses contemporary issues related to sexuality as a knowledge preparation for parents to face current ideological challenges [17]. Among the current topics discussed in this book are issues regarding transgender and LGBT ideologies, identity and gender

reinforcement, the phenomenon of homosexuality in schools, pornography, and child sexual grooming. Examining each issue from the perspective of Islamic religion is crucial to ensure that parental educational behaviours are in line with cultural norms and religious guidelines [18].

Focusing on LGBT pornography in a parenting book about sexuality is essential within an Islamic framework to address its ethical, spiritual, and societal implications. Islam emphasizes guiding individuals, particularly the younger generation, toward behaviors that align with moral and religious values [19]. Exposure to LGBT pornography may conflict with these principles, potentially normalizing behaviors deemed impermissible (*haram*) and influencing children's understanding of sexuality in ways that diverge from Islamic teachings. By addressing this issue, parents can be empowered to protect their children's faith (*iman*) and moral integrity while fostering accountability and self-discipline. Additionally, discussing this topic helps counter harmful societal influences and provides parents with tools to navigate these challenges in a manner rooted in Islamic principles, ensuring a balanced and faith-aligned upbringing [20].

The BBDATS book has successfully provided knowledge and practical guidance to parents on how they should communicate with their children about issues of sexuality [4]. By employing various methods and approaches in writing, the author effectively addresses these issues and offers practical solutions that can be implemented by parents. In summary, this book meets the needs of readers who urgently require guidance on sexuality parenting while still adhering to their religious and cultural values and beliefs.

4.1 Area of Recommendation

Despite its strengths, there are some areas where "Berbual-Bual dengan Anak tentang Seksualiti" could be improved. One issue is the lack of consistency in the running title above each chapter, which could make it easier for readers to relate current reading to specific chapter titles. Additionally, in Chapter 16, the author highlights the importance of fostering a positive sense of gender identity in children but provides examples for only a few of the strategies discussed. Expanding the chapter to include examples for all key points, especially those addressing how to effectively communicate the distinct qualities, roles, and virtues associated with being male or female, would significantly enhance its practical relevance and applicability for readers [21]. Discussing these unique qualities helps prevent confusion or distortion of gender identity, ensuring that children grow up with a clear understanding of their responsibilities, modesty, and moral conduct in accordance with Islamic principles [22]. Furthermore, when discussing the increasing HIV infection rates, the author could enhance the presentation by including graphs depicting current trends in HIV transmission methods. This would provide readers with a clearer understanding of the current situation.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the review of Wan Nur Syakira Wan Musa's book "Berbual-bual dengan Anak tentang Seksualiti (BBDATS)" has provided valuable insights into its content, purpose, and relevance [4]. By benchmarking the best practices and recommendations presented in BBDATS, we can enhance the effectiveness of SRH education initiatives. Moreover, the integration of Islamic perspectives in the book addresses the needs of Malaysia's predominantly Muslim population.

Acknowledgement

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support and funding provided by the Malaysia Ministry of Higher Education through the FRGS grant (Grant No. FRGS/1/2022/SKK06/UIAM/02/2).

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