

JAVA-MOSLEM FAMILY COMMUNICATION REGARDING SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTION HEALTH ISSUE

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Abstract

Pentingnya komunikasi antara orang tua dan anak tentang seksualitas masih menjadi perdebatan, terutama di budaya timur dan Islam yang masih mendefinisikannya sebagai perbincangan tabu. Orang tua yang kurang pemahaman tentang pentingnya pengetahuan kesehatan seksual dan reproduksi bagi anak lebih membiarkan anak mereka untuk mencari informasi dari sumber lain seperti teman sepermainan, dan media. Hal ini dikhawatirkan menghasilkan pemahaman yang salah sehingga meningkatkan infeksi seksualitas, kehamilan di usia muda dan aborsi. Penelitian ini ingin mengetahui sejauh mana orang tua berlatar belakang Jawa-Muslim berkomunikasi dengan anak-anak mereka tentang kesehatan reproduksi dan seksualitas. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan menginterview empat keluarga untuk mendeskripsikan bentuk komunikasi dan pemahaman mereka tentang isu tersebut. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa perbincangan tentang isu tersebut merupakan topik yang memalukan sehingga mereka cenderung tidak mengungkapkannya secara terbuka. Mereka mendiskusikannya secara implisit dimana kedua pihak memiliki tendensi untuk menolak komunikasi terbuka dan langsung. Dalam budaya Jawa sendiri memiliki larangan keras

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INTRODUCTION

Based on data from Religion Department in Surakarta, Indonesia, in 2014 there are 37 teens that sign their marriage up because of out-of-wedlock-pregnancy - without legally married. But not all teen pregnancy that caused by sexual misconduct and free sex ends in marriage. There is estimation 2 million abortion per year being practiced in Indonesia or 30% of pregnancy (Utomo, 2013) where 10% of it came from 19 years old girls. Only 35,3% of the teenage girl and 31,2% of teenage boys of 15-19 years old have sufficient knowledge that pregnancy can happen just in one time sexual encounter, based on 2012 Indonesian's survey of demographic and health. It can be concluded that a lot of teenagers still have the assumption that pregnancy should include repeating sexual intercourse (Situmorang, 2003). This misunderstanding can evoke decision about abortion or HIV/AIDS that spread primarily by unprotected sex. Factors like: parents-teens' communication quality, peer pressure, religious understanding, and exposure to pornographic materials become the cause of this pre-marriage sexual activity

(Darmasih, 2011).

For Indonesian, the conversation regarding sexual and reproduction health still considered taboo. This taboo culture makes information that actually should be known by teenager become hampered. A family that supposed to be the main transmitter of knowledge, value, behavior, and habit from generations to the next generation (Samovar, 2010) hold the pivotal role in delivering the message to their children. In order to prevent teen sexual behavior and pregnancy, communication between parent and children is important to be examined (Strauss, 2011).

Javanese and Islamic culture is the dominant culture in Indonesia. Javanese, as one of many other Indonesian cultures, always prioritize element of ethics in communication activity called unggah-ungguh, tata susila. There are life wisdom and traditional education that being used as consideration in the communication system in Javanese society (Purwadi, 2011). These values become an important basic foundation for a teenager in learning the sexual and reproduction health.

Islamic point of view regarding sexual activity can be seen from its prohibition of pre-marriage sexual

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intimacy between non-muhrim opposite sex or fornication (Zina) in Surat An Nisa verse 24, 25, 27. Surat Al Baqarah verse 222 explained the prohibition of the sexual encounter while having menstruation. This kind of banned supported by a scientific article about the risk that can be caused by such activity, such as sexually transmitted infection, endometriosis, and sudden death.

Through religion, moral codes, practices, values associated with its belief system. In Islam, sexuality is forbidden for a non-marital couple. Virginity should be kept until legal marriage happened. Religion, as one of cultural's deep structure, plays a pivotal role as socialization agent, especially regarding the sexual issue (Regnerus, 2009). The moral standard of Islamic regarding physical contact between opposite sex become one factor that constructs how the relationship between man and women should be limited.

One protective factor in an increasingly risky environment is the family unit (Cupp et al., 2013). For children, parents actually become one of the most important agents of socialization about sexuality (Wang, 2016) though it's not a primary concern to talk about to. So they rarely have a conversation about it (Pawlowski, 2006). Researches (Blake, 2001; Albert, 2010) proved that teens that have open communication with their parents about sexual issues, by getting advice about contraception and prevention information, are likely to hold their sexual activity. Over 80% of teens believed that intimate conversation helps them make better decisions regarding opposite-sex sexual relationship; they likely using condoms than others who don't talk with their parents.

Aside from parents, culture has a major role for teens in delaying their sexual activity (Andrulis in Strauss, 2011). Culture shaped and determined not only kinds of sexually related message, but also communication strategies should be used for parents in delivering it to their children. Not every culture have the same belief in encouraging this sensitive conversation; Javanese culture of Indonesia is an example where culture discouraged this open and intimate communication. It's not appropriate or common for a parent to discuss this sexual matter with their children. Lukas argued that 75% of the teenager not getting the sexual education at

all and the rest of 25% only get slightly information from their parent (as cited in Hanum, 2007). Javanese culture perceives sexual matter as taboo to be talked with parents or children.

Prior studies about sexual communication between parent-children have relied on the sample of western countries with very small researches being done in local Asian family context, like China (Wang, 2016; Zhang et al., 2007) and Thailand (Cupp et al., 2013). Results indicate that culture play a crucial role in shaping the content and strategies of parents' communication about sexuality.

Research about Javanese sex education really rare to be found. Javanese sex's self-disclosure being studied by Padmopuspito (1997) found that Javanese male more open than women to disclose their sexual problem. Javanese's taboo perspective about sex results in an assumption that sex should not be talk and taught to their children. This lead in seeing a sexual problem as a light problem and expect the children to learn it instinctively from other sources whereas the Islamic point of view about the interaction between non-married opposite sex really strict.

Javanese family with Islamic religion background will found this cultural reality hard to handle. In one side, Javanese culture fortifies their sexual communication content with ewuh-pakewuh, risih (feeling like not wanting to), and the other side, Islamic instruction really important to be delivered to the youngster for preventing them doing such sin. Above works of literature highlight the contradicting elements in communicating sex between parent and child, the Javanese culture hardens the way, how to bring the conversation about the sexual matter, while the Islamic content about it is urged to be known.

Using qualitative research, we try to describe the communication process and kinds of the message being exchanged among Javanese Moslem family members about sexual and reproduction health in Indonesia.

So, this study wants to know how is the process of parent-children communication when discussing sexual and reproduction issue? What kind of communication message that is exchanged between both of them? What kinds of obstacle parents face during transferring the message about sex and

reproduction to their children?

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Methods

Using qualitative content analysis, this study was conducted among four families in Indonesia. The respondents were chosen using purposive sampling with these criteria: parents with Javanese and Moslem culture, children (boys or girls) age ranged from 15 - 18 years old that still live in the same house.

Table 1. Demographic data of interviewees

No	Culture	Parents	Children
1	Java-Moslem	Father-Mother	Girl, 15 yo
2	Java-Moslem	Father-Mother	Girl, 15 yo
3	Java-Moslem	Father-Mother	Boy, 18 yo
4	Java-Moslem	Father-Mother	Boy, 18 yo

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In delivering the message about sex and reproduction, cultural barrier withholds communication process between parents and children. The theme consisted of six categories: Imbalance responsibility between parents, Javanese ethic as the main obstacle, Delaying the sexual advice due to children age perception, Television program become the initiator, Reproduction message more easy to be delivered than the sexual one, Religious message fails to be sent, and Other sources become children alternatives.

Imbalance responsibility between parents

Although parents think that both of them are responsible for telling this issue to their kid, but from fathers point of view, whether for the family with boys or girls, mothers considered to be more responsible in talking to their child because while he works, the mother stays at home longer than him. Mother is seen as more initiative than father in starting the conversation. Gender still play a dominant role in seeing who is more responsible for delivering the message. Fathers with girls think that mother should be

the one who will talk with their daughters.

"This is our responsibility. But, I was working and my wife stays at home. So, she spends more time with the children, though actually, this is our responsibility. So, we cannot blame who's got to responsible, because I was working, I don't know at all with what my children doing out there or like what they have done daily, I don't know clearly." (Father, Family #3).

"It's our responsibility. Though it's better if my wife is the one who's talking to my daughter, it would be more understandable..." (Father, Family #2)

"That's my wife business because my child is a girl" (Father, Family #1)

"..because my child is both girls, so that will be their mother task to talk about that" (Father, Family #2)

In the studies about sexual socialization, mothers usually become the main communicators (Romo et al., 2011). Boys and girls have seen more comfortable discussing sexuality with their mothers than with fathers.

"Message from my father just ordinary, but mother is more detail because of we both women" (Girl, Family #1)

"Conversation with my mother is more comfortable, cause my father just always got angry" (Boy, Family #3)

Javanese ethic as the main obstacle

Though all parents think that sex and reproduction are important and children need to know all of them to admit that they never have a proper and planned conversation because this kind of issue considered taboo. The parents still feel reluctant to talk about it, whether with their partner or their child. It can be seen from the lack of planning that both of them make previously in how and what kind of content should they talk with their children. Their perception about the urgency of the message is contradicting with their real action toward it. "Ewuh" or unwillingness to talk because they still considered that sexual issue is taboo became the main obstacle that withholds the communication. The Javanese ethic in seeing this issue to talk openly and honestly with that child and vice versa withhold their communication process and content.

"We don't limit the conversation with our children, but when the topic is directed to that sexual issue we stop talking about it. When the children are older, they can evaluate themselves, what should be done or not. Generally, that kind of conversation is taboo to be talking to. It's risih (taboo) when we talk about it" (Mother, Family #3)

To initiate a conversation about sex with children, parents would risk embarrassment on behalf of parents and children.

"mmm...I can't tell it clearly enough, I don't know how to deliver it well, if it too clearly, I feel ashamed with myself" (Mother, Family #1)

"I need to know about sexual information, but I feel shy to ask my parents" (Girl, Family #1)

Delaying the sexual advice due to children age perception

Other than *ewuh* (feeling not wanting to) culture that hamper their motivation to talk about the sexual and reproduction issue, their perception regarding the readiness of their children also have a role. Age appropriate became the first reason why they withhold to talk about it. Father with younger child thinks that the child does not mature enough and that kind of issue is not important yet. Parents are afraid if they force to talk about it, the child will be confused or worse, wanting to know more.

"..seeing the context of sexual conversation itself and child limitation and capability, the way they think, the way they accept it. If a child is considered be able to talk about it, it will be no problem, but they don't ready enough, it would be confusing for them" (Father, Family #2)

"It's important when it's come to the health issue, but not the sexual. She is still fifteen, so I think it's not necessarily yet" (Father, Family #1)

"because my daughter is still in junior high school, I think it's not important to talk about it right now. If she gets older, she will know by herself that sexual problem" (Father, Family #1)

"Health is important, but if we open about a sexual problem, what if they want to see, want to try, want to know more, besides one day they will know by themselves. (Father, Family #4)

Television program become the initiator

Because of the confusion and awkwardness how to start the conversation with the child, parents usually rely on the television program to initiate the topic. Watching television is the "helper" for them to start discussing it, is it because of the content of the television or the relaxing atmosphere caused by watching television together.

"While we are watching television, there's news like rape or sexual harassment. That's the time I start to talk with my children" (Mother, Family #1)

"When there's a news on television about sexual crime, or doctor Oz (health program) talk about reproduction issue then we discuss it together" (Mother, Family #2)

Reproduction message easier to be delivered than the sexual one

Mother admitted that she never talk with their daughter about the sexual issue, just about reproduction matter. Menstruation and circumcised are the only things that they discuss with their child, because of it less taboo.

"I talk about reproduction issue, but not the sexual one" (Mother, Family #1)

"It's about how to keep clean that area, when you get menstruation you should change the pad regularly" (Mother, Family #2)

"My father once tell me about this circumcision thing, but I don't remember it well what he said" (Boy, Family #4)

"When my son got a circumcision, I explained to him what is that (circumcision). It means that you already grew up" (Father, Family #3).

The religious message fails to be sent

Islam has a strict rule about how to regulate opposite sex interaction. Though they all came from the Moslem culture, not all of them forbid their children to date. For parents that give permission for their children to have a close relationship with opposite sex, they just warn them to be careful, not to break the limit, or it will jeopardize family's dignity. In Indonesia, both men and women sexuality is seen as God gift that must be controlled in order to maintain family honor and community order (Blackwood, 2007).

"It's okay for you to have a girlfriend, but don't go too far. If you ever break the limit that results in a problem, it will humiliate our family (Mother, Family #4)

"I remind her not to embarrassed our family" (Mother, Family #1)

Though they did not quite explain about the Islamic's point of view in a non-marriage opposite-sex relationship, they just warn them with sin that they will get.

".they should know the limit when having a friend with boys. I actually tell them that dating is a sin, but they don't listen so I just ask them to keep their dignity, don't cross the line" (Mother, Family #2)

"When it comes to dating girl, I warn him that it's okay to dating as long as not breaking religion command. Date deservedly and if you ever did sexual intercourse, it will bring sin and feel pity for the girl, she is someone else daughter, we must responsible, though both of us is in disadvantaged." (Mother, Family #3)

Other information sources become children alternatives

The lack of parent role in communicating with their children regarding this issue, the children tend to look for other sources.

"I got the information from the school, Google, or my sister" (Girl, Family #2)

The children are not the only one that depends on non-parents sources; the parents themselves also think that their children will be known by themselves from outside source of information.

"Usually they know first from her friends, her school. If she needs to talk to me, need sharing with her parents, maybe I will talk with her, but all this time she never asked for my advice. " (Mother, Family #1)

"I never tell the consequences of sexual and reproduction issue. I think she got the information from her peers, her daily television watching, that already gives knowledge to her. The lesson doesn't have to be theoretical, right." (Mother, Family #2)

All parents agreed that both parents have the responsibility to give explanation, advice, and warn their children regarding the rules and consequences that they may face when dealing with sexual and reproduction problem. But it seems like they just have

pseudo-unity, the burden is in the mothers. Fathers' excuses that they should work and spend very little time with those children become the reason why they think that mother is the only one that should deliver the message.

The mother tends to become dominant sex educators for their children (Fisher, 1987). Mother considered better communicator because her explanation is more detail than father and the children are more comfortable when having a conversation with her. This finding is consistent with studies about the impact of mother-daughter communication regarding the high acceptability of daughters on HPV vaccine in a mostly European-American sample (Romo et al., 2011). Whether researches in US and China, findings demonstrated that teenager more likely to discussed sexual issue with mothers than fathers (Zhang et al., 2007) because the mother is the one who initiates the conversation (Segrin, 2011). So, actually, fathers' participation in children sex education should be enhanced.

Gender plays an important part in family communication. There was a strong belief that when talking about the sexual issue, the father should talk with their sons and mothers with their daughters (Strauss, 2011). Fathers with girls think that their daughter should talk with their mother because they can have more women conversation. Mothers feel like they understand female sexual issues better than male's one, so she is the one that active in delivering the message especially in reproduction issue.

There are different approaches that parents use to talk about sexual content. All of the parents in this study use what Rosenthal (1998) said as the opportunistic communicator. Opportunistic communicator looks for moments and certain conditions to begin a discussion and used catalysts like TV programs/ news. When the whole family spending time together by watching TV together is seen as the right setting and time to initiate this taboo topic. The presence of other activities, like watching and discussing TV program, allows for the diffusion of any possible anxiety or tension. TV performs as an important source of "negative exemplar" to address the risks of sex and dating (Wang, 2016).

Cultures do have effects on the way people communicate. People in individualistic engage in low-context communication, while collectivistic society engages in high-context communication, respectively (Samovar, 2010). Javanese people belong to Indonesian country that has deep eastern culture. This ethnic group dominates 45% of the total population and become not only the largest single ethnic group not only in Indonesia but also in Southeast Asia (Cherry, 2014). This eastern culture tends to have collectivist and high-context communication comparing to western's individualistic. This is the reason why people expected to camouflage and conceal speak's true intentions in order to maintain the harmony of the group. They may engage in less self-disclosure, especially when it comes to the issue that considered taboo.

This Javanese culture on sex talk between different generations have the same perspective with Chinese culture; parents generally try to avoid having a conversation about sex-related matters directly with their children because these issues are considered to be sensitive, personal and embarrassing (Zhang et al., 2007). This is similar with Latino parents that also have difficulty in delivering the same taboo issue, because of the cultural tradition (Rios-Ellis et al., 2011).

Some of the factors that influence the process of parent-child communication about sex are rooted in parents' perception of sex and sexuality. For example, mothers' self-efficacy (i.e., belief in their capability to talk effectively with their child) and comfort level with discussing sex are both positively associated with initiating communication about sex with their preadolescent children (Segrin, 2011). So, when this belief being weakened by cultural ethic, the communication is not intended to directly influence children's perspective regarding sexual decisions, but only become a not-wholly-hearted conversation without specific purposes.

CONCLUSION

We can conclude that the sexual and reproduction communication between parents and children in Java-Moslem family is an embarrassing topic that talks implicitly with mothers as a main communicator of the family when both parties had a

mutual tendency to avoid open and direct communication. In their consciousness, all parents think that sexual and reproduction-related message is important for their children. Particularly, in the Moslem culture where interaction between non-marriage of opposite sex is strictly regulated. Ironically, this kind of conversation did not come in their agenda. They treat these topics with a "hands-off" attitude, with excuses like that their child are not ready enough and they will know naturally as they grown up until their dependence on outside resources. Parents' role also imbalance in who is responsible for delivering the message. The mothers are seen more "burden" because fathers' excuse of their lack of time they spending with their children. Javanese collectivist and high-context of communication became the reason why this sexual issue so hard to discuss in the family. Consequently, Islamic warning and sin that arise from an illegally physical interaction between opposite sex also become impossible to deliver.

Java-Moslem family is not the only culture that has fewer conversation about sex and reproduction between parents and their children. Other culture such as Latin and Thailand already worked on a kind of family-based program that provide parents with skills to engage in a discussion that can reduce parental discomfort in addressing sensitive topics in order to have more honest and open discussions with their youth about the sexual issue. The implication of this study is the awareness that though sexual and reproduction matter seems unnecessary and taboo to talk about but that's not the reason to stop talking about it. Research shows that parents' communication style can have a major impact in shaping the sexual perception and attitudes of their children. Further intervention in the way Java-Moslem culture parents communicate with their children should be developed soon.

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