



## Sexual education and morality: perspective of religious leaders of Lahore, Pakistan

**Muhammad Shoaib Raza**

*M.Phil. Sociology /Visiting Faculty University of the Punjab, Lahore*

*hafizshoaibraza@gmail.com*

**Arham Ehsan**

*Lecturer Islamic studies, Government Dyal Singh Graduate College, Lahore.*

*arhamehsan01@gmail.com*

### **Abstract**

*Sex education as a component of curriculum for school education is a controversial topic in Pakistan. Some of the religious scholars hold the view that sex education during childhood may have positive effect on reproductive health of the youngsters but the others (the conservative ones) are of the view that at school level it will be more drastic in its repercussion in the form of making society more prone to sexual activities even in premature age. This highly contested and sensitive issue acquires religious overtones and the scientific community seems reluctant to investigate it. This study documents the views and opinions of religious scholars in Pakistan. This paper analyzes and highlights Rather than debating the position of Islam on morality and sexual education, the paper explores the minds of religious leaders who greatly influence the views of the general public.*

**Key words:** *Morality, sexuality, sexual education, formal education*

### **Introduction**

Education is key toward a successful life. It's an awareness which helps in national growth and development. Awareness about social problems is part of education. Sexual abuse is a major social problem in Pakistan. According to an organization functioning for nonviolent environment for youngsters and deal with Child abuse the graph of sexual abuse in Pakistan is going up day by day. Statically there were 2846 cases of sexual abuse in 2019. To tackle this problem sexual and preventive education plays an important role in this regard.

Health literacy is a basic human right. Awareness about sexual health is part of this literacy that can be beneficial for adults at their educational level. It's need for educational institutions under health literacy. This awareness should be started at an early age but because of cultural and religious sensitivities people are hesitant and not comfortable to discuss. Even Pakistani scholars and academicians are not ready to be part of their dialogues in their groups and gatherings. They consider it an obscenity and not even discuss it with health experts.

We discussed this problem with religious scholars who are the opinion leaders. People are able to accept their talks and opinions. So, we decided to have a talk with these opinion leaders.

The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) describes inclusive sex education as: "Education about all matters relating to sexuality and its expression. Comprehensive sexuality education covers the same topics as sex education but also includes issues such as relationships, attitudes towards sexuality, sexual roles, gender relations and the social pressures to be sexually active, and it provides information about sexual and reproductive health services. It may also include training in communication and decision-making skills (Irala, Osorio, Beltramo, Carlos 2014). Bernard and Joshua define morality as, "certain codes of conducts put forward by a society or a group (such as religion) or accepted by an individual for his/her own behavior, or normatively



it refers to a code of conduct under given specified conditions, which would be put forward by all rational persons” (Bernard, Joshua 2017).

Religious education and moral education are same in some countries like in Japan, where there is no established mechanism of separate moral education in schools; rather religious teachings accomplish this purpose, which seems to be a wise policy (Luhmer, 1990). In the aftermath of First World War, first sex education curriculum was inaugurated by United States for its schoolchildren. Educational historian Jonathan Zimmerman argues that school-based sex education was started in united states earlier then Europe because united states belief in schools as an impetus for betterment of its society during progressive era (Tran, 2017). Ben Spiecker asserts that coaching about sex is already ethical education, because moral compulsions are inseparably complicated in any kind of sensual affiliation (Spiecker, 1992).

Sex education must be established on liberal moral philosophy. They holds that the moral essentials of sex coaching should indorse ‘the asset of admiration for all grown-up’s right of sexual self-determination’ (Stutel, Ruyter, 2011). They propose that schooling must prompt three aspects: initially and more particularly respect of each individual’s right to self-autonomy, secondly boldness of hatred to the desecration of sexual liberty, and thirdly an aptitude for smearing the standards of sexual liberty (Heyes, 2018). There must be the rule of ‘democratic principle’ about the ethics in sex education, which must be based on the principle of freedom and choice (Lamb & Plocha, 2011).

Another study proposes that sex education should be based on “scientifically based information” (MoSES, 2012). Most likely logical knowledge is impartial, honest, protected, and based on the evidences.

The aims of sex education are relegating self-sufficiency, endorsing affinity, making individuals free to lead their lives and providing steadfast information to the students regarding their body structure, contraceptive ways, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and the risks (McAvoy, 2013). Humans are sexual beings since the time of their birth and their sexual identity is constructed by the many aspects such as blood relation’s attitude towards their kids’ sexual category.

Parents are the primary coaches of their families. The mission of reforms in the education structure can be accomplished not only by limited discussion on sexuality, but it requires a concrete model of education that is democratic, scientific and openly debatable without considering age limit, while context and way of delivering is important in this context .The significant thing is not the amount of material is not significant thing being delivered, but the excellence of the instructor’s arrogance (Bourdette 2006).

Active involvement and support by the community members is the primary criteria of sexuality. That is, our masculinity or femininity is fragment of our environment as human beings. So, we can approximately say that this type of information is obligatory as sexuality is a rudimentary component of any men and women. Sexual education is pivotal because it can affect the aspects of health and happiness in one’s life, so the goal of integrating the morality and sex education is to produce the effective citizens and a civilized society (Ott, K. (2007).

Religious perspective is entirely different from western liberal and conservative ones, for instance Muslim concept of morality contains mainly in resonant out the compulsions, obligations and responsibilities that are set out in the sharia. As concerned with the link between religion and



morality; there is no distinct discipline of morals in sharia, and the relative significance of reason and expose in causal ethical values, is exposed to discussion. God defines halal and haram, good and bad in Islam.

In the Islam we can find three types of Values: (a) Akhlaq, which talk about to the obligations and duties fixed by the shari'ah, (b) Adab, which focuses on the behaviors allied with moral upbringing, (c) the good behavior showed by a virtuous Muslim. The basic variances within Islamic and Western concept of ethics are the emphasis on eternal sacred ideologies, legal aspect of applying morality, concept of right and wrong, the refusal of ethical sovereignty as a goal of moral instruction and the strain on incentive in the Hereafter as a instigator of moral conduct.

Morality is clearly defined in Quran. Rafiei claims that nothing is important in Islam than study of morality, he describes morals as a constant state of the soul by which it is conceivable for a human being to do value-based work immediately (Rafiei, 2002). He classifies three types of morals: "philosophical morality, morality based on religious prescription and mystical morality". He believes that moral development of kids is basic goal of education (Attaran, 1989).

Al-Ghazali emphasizes the significance of different stakeholders in the moral education of youngsters, specially parents, peers and instructors, and similarly the importance of specific activities like exercise, praise, discipline and value based guidelines (Bureau of Houzeh and University Cooperation, 1993), He thinks that moral education is basic goal of education and makes it clear that moral education is closely related to religious faith, his all explanations are based on religious beliefs (Alavi, 2007).

#### **Objectives:**

1. Gaining view point of religious scholars regarding sex education to youngsters
2. Gaining perspective of religious scholars regarding morality
3. To pick the answer regarding the question " how far morality restricts sex education

#### **Methodology**

This paper was endorsed by the board of professors University of the Punjab Lahore, Pakistan. The objectives and methodology of the study was likewise evaluated by a group of instructors from the Punjab University Lahore, Pakistan.

This study contains in-depth interviews with 14 religious scholars in Lahore nominated via purposive sampling. Lahore (whole are) is alienated into 6 segments, and a struggle was made to choose 2 religious leaders from every section, with progress. To comprise the views of advanced and famous religious leaders we selected well known representatives and intellectual religious leaders.

In this study "religious leader" means someone having religious education who teaches Islamic education in an institution such as a madrasa, or in a university or collage. Religious leaders were communicated at their work place, informed them about the research, its objectives, and asked to join. 12 persons were emailed only 10 showed interest in study; from 2 of them said that they were unavailable to join and reluctant to talk on this theme. Of the ten who originally decided to join, one of them gives us short period for interview because of sensitiveness of topic. In the end 10 interviews were finalized within the four-week period in March 2019 to May 2019. Before the opening of each interview informed consent was attained.

Semi-structured framework was used to sightsee the opinions of participants. The framework of open-ended questions were made on the basis of literature and previous qualitative researches



allied in this field. Several open-ended questions were questioned to explicit member's opinion about sexual education at school, college and university level. They were also asked about their experience during the lecture of this issue in class. Interviews were accompanied in member's first language, Urdu, and lasted 40 minutes. With the consent of participants, we record interviews and on paper note were also occupied.

### **Participants' characteristics**

Ten interviewed participants were all male. Four were employed as full-time imam at mosques and also teach in a graduate level collage, all were speaker of Juma sermon and three of them also a writer in different newspapers and general. Rest of Three were working as professor in leading universities of Pakistan and also every one of them were leading as head of religious seminaries. All participants have the background of religious studies; rather two of them have the degree of economics and physical education. The age rang was from 26 to 45 years. Almost all were married and lived with children.

Respondents represented different educational background, almost were the experience to participate in different workshops and conferences related to that vary topic. Even three participants of them reported having the specialized knowledge in that very topic. Two of them were also the member of curricula committee of religious institutes.

### **Data Analysis**

All recorded interviews were write down by the second author. The written material were transformed into English by second author, who is excellence in Urdu and English. Constant comparison methods of data analysis and Analytic induction were used for efficient inspection of views that were similar between participants (Auerbach, & Louise B, 2003). Subsequently several analyses of the texts, the researcher first of all identified communal themes such as sexual education and morality, formal and informal sexual education, etc. secondly, the themes were coded to find out the patterns; third, data were researched for comparable occurrences or periodic spectacles; and fourth, findings were converted into theoretical paradigms that were refined unceasingly till all the cases of contradictions and similarities were enlightened. In order to sanctuary the strength of the answers, the author showed off the original write-up with the study fellow, who was his part as helper in most of the interviews. Finally, the findings were discussed with all the candidates. Few of them provided explanations of certain their remarks, which were incorporated into the final text.

### **Findings:**

The area where we collected the views of religious scholars contained their opinions on moral education, sexuality, position of sexual education, and their perspective on stabling blocks in the way of sexual education in our society. During the course of interviews, we tried to realize what the status of moral education is? Does it have any link with sex education to address the socio religious problems of sexuality in our society? We also collected information about their perceptions about seriousness of the problem of sexuality in Pakistan and his influence of absence of formal sexual education among youth. At the end, we tried to look their viewpoint on some serious questions like, "why sexual education could not be hailed as a separate formal subject to encounter sexual deviance? And why our society does not take sexual issues ordinary ones instead of considering it strange matter? We collected their views in detail.



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### **Morality and moral education**

In answer to our question regarding ‘morality and moral education’, nearly all the participants share the homogeneous views on the concepts of “morality and moral education.” Some (5 of 10) said that, “in general, moral education is the mother of all discipline of knowledge. According to Islam morality is not separate discipline instead it is preface of every discipline of knowledge. The reason to introduce morality as a separate discipline of curriculum is to highlights its utility and to make children conscious of its importance.

Most of the leaders (4 of 10) said that in order to attain symphonic smooth functioning of society moral education is fundamental one. Most (7 of 10) quoted the example of Western cultured states, where, they said that these countries are at the height of morality in their social affairs and have a concrete formal as well as informal moral educational system. The fact that they have based it on the pragmatic grounds of Islamic conception of morality.

Explaining the universalism of the conception of morality and importance of propagation of moral education. One religious leader, with ten years of Madrasa education and Ph.D scholar said:

*Purpose is to make the useful persons and this has also remained the purpose of prophets. Morality is a universal concept for example; lie is detested in each and every part of the world. But at the same time, it is also relative in its meaning system. Particular cultures adopt it according to their own choice and values. For example, different greetings ways in different parts of the world’s giving them indigenous system morally. But the when main principles of morality are amalgamated with a culture, it does not remain in its original form. With changing culture, the meaning of the morality gets changed and it lefts context specific only.*

Another religious leader gives the example morality as,

*“When a teacher tells a lie it is taken ill, on the other side if a politician does the same thing it is portrait as the common man. This is how morality becomes context specific with varying culture.”*

One middle-aged religious leader, with eight years of religious education and MPhil, argued on the question about moral education as a separate discipline that it should not be taken as separate discipline because it covers in socialization process and part of every discipline. He argued that

The basic purpose of education is to produce the civilized persons in society, the way with the inculcation of morality as the separate subject is the curriculum are introduce as pretext in every discipline of knowledge and a basic element of socialization process which is the responsibility of parents. In this way morality as, separate subject is also context specific but it must not leave the basic purpose of producing the civilized and useful persons to the society. The quest of a society decides to how much extent moral education must be provided in the educational curriculum.

### **Sexual Education and Morality:**

Almost all the religious leaders (9 of 10) have the commonality in their view on the concept of “sexual education” in our society. They argued that we are living in a Special societal structure ` of norm and values where sexual education is not big issue.

One religious leader in his mid-twenties who had six years of madrasa education said that:



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*“there is no need of as such sexual education in our society because it is a west oriented conception launched to promulgate premature adultery and illicit thought among our youngsters just to earn the good name and foreign funding, this is how it is in contrast to the soul conception of Islamic morality in our society. This is how sexual education influence morality of youth.”*

Sex is a natural phenomenon encircling the youth particularly, in their daily life. To make this phenomenon in a healthy way and to alienate youth from sexual abuse, it is pertinent to highlight that sexual education must be disseminated by all social institution specially by the Ulmah to make it legitimate ethically and religiously.

Another religious leader who is PhD scholar and a head of religious seminary with opposite view point reasoned:

*“Islam likes other religions emphasis on the abstinence of vices and adaptation of good deeds, in this way sexual education is also a form of ethical education which nurtures the youth in an environment that abstain them from sexual abuse and other social deviances. It is a form of socialization as well.”*

#### **Western and Islamic conception of sexual education;**

Almost all the religious leaders were stick to the common view point of unique method of sexual education of Islam as compared to that of western conception on the basis of its utility and ethical consideration; To them, Islamic conception of sexual education is introvert one that brings up its followers in their personal capacity without pipelining the adultery in the society in the name of open sexual education, as practiced in the western countries .they argue , this is how the western countries are more prone to the premature adultery and sexualization of society.

One of religious leader who is teaching in religious institute and also in a university asserts;

*We are living in an Islamic country based on Islamic norms and values in every aspect of life, while the principles of western social system were formulated through a liberal way of thinking without considering the ethical and religious consideration ,in which adultery is allowed with the mutual consent and in the same way the sexual education is dissimilated at public sphere to make it safe in pursuance of individuals’ physical needs ,in contras; Islam gives its own conduct of Nikkah for the fulfillment of the sexual desires under which the detailed discussion in sharia has been illustrated to encounter the sexual problems after marriage. prohibited adultery.*

Another interview who is imam in a mosque and teaching in religious institute argues

Western conception of sexual education allows the youth to go for physical intercourses but under the safety nets regarding medical issues only like unwanted pregnancies and sexual disseminated diseases like HIV and hepatitis, While Islam forbids pre Nikah physical intercourses and calls it adultery and gives this issue ethical as well as moral consideration by forbidding the sexual education dissemination publicly.

This is how western discourse of sexual education is totally different from that of Islamic one on basis of the devastation of family institution in the name of instigating the sexual desires even in premature age and resulting the unwanted pregnancies and begetting the child’s without exact father name, in this way western civilization is suffering from identity crisis due to premature sexual education as its repercussions.

### **Sex education as part of curricula**

Religious leaders (7/10) opposed the idea of making the sexual education as the separate subject of curricula in the name of awareness of sexual issues in the society, to them, such an attempt to make sexual education as a separate subject of curricula in the formal way will be against the very soul of Pakistani norms and values and the religious teachings of Islam as ,doing this will be equal to instigate the pre mature sexual desires among the youth and will result in the promotion of sexually active premature youngsters in the society.

One of the religious leader who is teacher in religious seminary points out:

If sexual education is made the part of educational curricula formally, it will be the deliberate step to invite the young girls and boys to seek intention towards premature sexual thoughts resulting in the form of the increased rate of juvenile sexual activities in the society which will tarnish the very ethical and moral fabric of society.

In contrast (3/10) gave the entirely different view point from the above mentioned one, and stressed on making the sexual education as a separate subject of curricula to combat the growing rate of adultery in the form of sodomy and premature sexual abuse for fulfillment of instigated sexual desire among youth due to easy access of juvenile pornography and over flooding of illicit material on internet. To them, making the sexual education as the separate subject of curricula will socialize the youngsters to abstain from illicit activities by giving them awareness of spillover effect of indulging in premature sexual activities in the form of health hazards and social deviance.

Like one of the Islamic scholar is writer in newspaper and also a member of council of Islamic ideology Pakistan asserts;

Islam provides a clear guideline to run the sexual affairs under the boundary of sharia, even Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) illustrated the sexual issues form his own life to his followers to run a healthy sexual life, and for example Islam has elaborated how to deal an adult life before marriage and after marriage. In this way there is no problem as such to make sexual education as a part of curricula formally for the smooth running of sexual life at individual level and public at large in the form of begetting a healthy progeny.

In the debate of making sexual education a separate subject of curricula formally or informally, there exist a striking view point in between the lines focusing on the adopting the sexual education as a separate subject in curricula only in the grey areas which are more prone to be the victim of illicit sexual activities in the form of sodomy and adultery, but this must be done only by taking the services of experts only who can promulgate this particular education by keeping in mind the geo ethnic and socio cultural realities of that particular area.

For example Kasur (district of Punjab Pakistan) is more prone to the sodomy; there the only resort is the promulgation of sexual education without indulging in the debate of making it in formal or informal way through the collaboration of psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists and religious scholars; who are capable enough to understand the geo sociological and ethnographic realities of that area.

Like one of the religious leader who is professor in government collage opines while giving the interview;



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*“Sexual education must be promulgated age wise and gender wise by the experts only keeping in mind the psyche of the subjects under the scale of their respective age group and gender type”*

**Indigenous stumbling block in promulgation of sexual education in Pakistan**

The major stumbling block in promulgation of sexual education in formal or informal ways is the foreign funding syndrome” of some of indigenous religious scholars in Pakistan and they give the reason that making sexual education as a separate formal subject of curricula is nothing but the propaganda of west through the NGOs and INGOs to show the darker face of Pakistani society and blotting the image of Islam by showing its scholars conservatives ones.

As one of the interviewee who is imam in mosque and also professor in a public sector university asserted in this context

I myself am a professor, being professor and knowing in-depth covert purpose of the flag barriers of introducing the sexual education as a separate subject in the curricula, have reached to the view point that indigenous attempt of introducing the sexual education as a separate subject formally in the curricula is nothing but the propaganda created by the West against the Pakistani society through assuring the funding to the local researchers to provide the biased and tempered data to the NGOs and INGOs for blotting the image of Islam and showing Pakistani society a conservative one.

One of the religious leader highlights the double standard of religious leaders. They stated that doing sexual socialization in madrasas (religious seminary) is normal even to those students who are not attainment at the age of adultery. But this looks like a normal but same teacher of madrasas are show hurdles when government try to become the part of formal education system.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

Morality is considered as essence of all the knowledge in the literary circles of the whole world. It is hailed as the mother of all the disciplines of literature in all over the world irrespective of geo-strategic and socio-cultural grounds. Morality is the prerequisite for the smooth functioning of the society as it provides the common good of goodness and fairness for public at large irrespective of the caste, color, creed or religion. In its utility, morality can be equated to the goodness and righteousness (Latif, 2008). Nevertheless, the meaning system of the conception of morality somehow changes with respect to the varying cultural code in different regions of the world.

However, it is pertinent to highlight that the moral ground are somehow stronger in practice in western countries as compared to that of Islamic countries. The reason is very simple and appealing that Socio economic and socio political conditions are somehow terrible in Islamic countries as compared to that of western countries, which is rendering the Muslim countries far behind in the race of moral practices irrespective of the fact that the theoretical grounds of morality are much stronger in the code of conduct of Islam as compared to other religions and other ethnic cultures as well.

Islam gives the evident code of morality through its teachings about morality in all the business of life elucidated by Quranic verses and its practical manifestations in the life of prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). Islam believe in the practicality of knowledge in the form of being honest to everyone even in intentions, keeping in mind that even no one is seeing but no one can escape oneself from the eyes of God, which is the other name of being faithful or pious under the complete code of morality (Jalil, 2013)



Sexual education is considered as permanent feature of socio cultural grooming of an individual in the society in the modern world. The flag barriers of human rights have very deep consideration open making the sexual education as basic human right and proclaiming it not excluded from the ambit of morality. “Moral elements of sex education should promote ‘the virtue of respect for every adult’s rights of sexual self-determination” (Steutel, & De Ruyter,, 2011).

However, there is segregation in the view points of the Islamic scholars regarding sexual education and considering it the part of moral system in Islam. A number of Islamic scholars have stanch belief against sexual education and taking it not excluded from the moral code. they believe that sexual education can’t not be hailed openly in a society as it can instigate re mature sexual arousals among children making society more prone to the adultery. But this view point of particular group of Islamic scholars seems to be a weaker one. However, the other group of scholars believes in its dissemination by including it in the moral code of Islam, based on its utility.

As, sexual education can keep society away from grave sexual transmitted diseases like HIV and hepatitis, it is made as the permanent feature of the morality and education in western world and even in some of the Islamic countries based on its utility. In kenya awareness of HIV is part of educational curricula (Rogow & Haberland, 2005). Religious education and moral education are even same in some countries like Japan, where there moral and sexual education are not disseminated by the separate institution instead of its transmission through the religious institutions (Luhmer, 1990).

Islamic and western conception of sexual education is entirely different in characteristics and basis. Islam is the complete code of conduct of life given by the divine possession through the sharia of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W); here morality is kept as the most essential trait of all Islamic teachings. Islam does not compromise on the morality which is the common good for all.

So, to many Islamic scholars sexual education cannot be disseminated openly as it can harm Piety, the prominent trait of Islam in the form of rampant culture of nudity and adultery in the name of sexual education. However, the western conception of sexual education is based on the free will of man to make the principles and code of conduct of life irrespective of taking morality into consideration, in Bulgaria, homosexuality and pre-marital sex is very common between same age groups (Parker, Wellings, & Lazarus, 2009).

They believe in the utility of this conception of dissemination of sexual education on basis if health issues and satisfaction of extra marital physical needs. Western scholars believe that moral essentials of sexual coaching must indorse “the virtue of respect for every adult’s rights of sexual self-determination” (BOURGET, 2006). To them, sex education must include three things : firstly and most importantly ‘individual’s right of self-determination. Secondly, an approach of hatred to the violation of sexual liberty. Thirdly, capability for applying the principles of sex education (Heyes, 2008). While Islam enchants about the Nikkah–satisfaction of marital sexual needs only for maintaining the order of society.

The question on making sexual education as a separate subject of curricula is very striking and diverse in the answers by the western and Islamic code of morality. Most of the Islamic scholars believe in making the sexual education a separate subject of curricula at school level will be equal to making schools more prone to adultery even in the premature age. Currently, sexual “education in grade school curriculum is taught more as an introduction to the sexual life” (Kirby, 1999).



While western scholars believe in making it a permanent part of school education curricula will be a step forward towards taking the children aware of sexually transmitted diseases already if they undergo premature sexual activities on the basis of liberal theory of sex education. It is not particular about sexual acts but, instead, could mean a broadening of the entire enterprise of sex education to deal not only with anatomy, reproduction and disease or pregnancy prevention but also to include gender role socialization. To do this, educators would have to acknowledge children as sexual beings (Kenney, Guardado, & Brown, 1989).

In a nut shell, it can be concluded that the dynamics and meaning system of morality and moral education, sexuality and sexual education are entirely different in western and Islamic civilizations. However due to cultural diffusion and cross border mobility the western conception of making sexual education as the permanent part of school grader curriculum is also proliferating in Pakistan.

Some of our religious leaders also call it as necessary to meet the contemporary challenges of sexually transmitted diseases and adultery in premature age. All in all, it can be suggested that there must be a proper legislation on this issue to meet the challenges of contemporary world keeping in view the socio cultural and socio religious dynamics of Pakistani society. Else, we will be standing in the middle of nowhere in this world of over promising and under delivering.

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