CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF CAKNA DIRI: A MODULE FOR SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH EDUCATION FOR MALAYSIAN PARENTS

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ABSTRACT

This Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the *Cakna Diri* Module explores how the parenting module, developed by *Lembaga Penduduk dan Pembangunan Keluarga Negara* (LPPKN), reflects and shapes power dynamics, ideologies, and social practices in the context of parenting sexuality in Malaysia. Utilizing Norman Fairclough's CDA framework, the study examines how language constructs relationships of authority, conveys cultural and religious values, and communicates moral responsibilities related to SRH. The module emphasizes Islamic principles and conservative social norms, particularly regarding gender roles, sexuality, and parental guidance. Through analysis, the study highlights how the module frames issues such as pre-marital sex, boundaries, and family structures, while reinforcing parents' roles as moral gatekeepers. Furthermore, this CDA addresses how the module responds to societal concerns over youth behaviour, engaging with discourses of modernity and cultural identity in Malaysia. This analysis provides valuable input for improving SRH education approaches within the Malaysian socio-cultural and religious context.

Keywords: Sexuality, Education, Module, Discourse Analysis

ABSTRAK

Analisis Wacana Kritis (CDA) terhadap Modul Cakna Diri ini meneroka bagaimana modul keibubapaan yang dibangunkan oleh Lembaga Penduduk dan Pembangunan Keluarga Negara (LPPKN) mencerminkan dan membentuk dinamika kuasa, ideologi, serta amalan sosial dalam konteks keibubapaan seksualiti di Malaysia. Menggunakan kerangka Analisis Wacana Kritis oleh Norman Fairclough, kajian ini meneliti bagaimana bahasa membentuk hubungan autoriti, menyampaikan nilai budaya dan keagamaan, serta mengkomunikasikan tanggungjawab moral berkaitan kesihatan reproduktif dan seksual (SRH). Modul ini menekankan prinsip Islam dan norma sosial konservatif, khususnya berkaitan peranan jantina, seksualiti, dan bimbingan ibu bapa. Melalui analisis, kajian ini menyoroti bagaimana modul ini merangka isu seperti seks sebelum nikah, batasan pergaulan, dan struktur kekeluargaan, sambil memperkukuh peranan ibu bapa sebagai penjaga moral. Selain itu, CDA ini turut membincangkan bagaimana modul ini memberi respons terhadap kebimbangan masyarakat mengenai tingkah laku remaja dengan berinteraksi dalam wacana kemodenan dan identiti budaya di Malaysia. Analisis ini memberikan input yang bernilai dalam menambah baik pendekatan pendidikan SRH dalam konteks sosio-budaya dan keagamaan di Malaysia.

Kata kunci: Seksualiti, Pendidikan, Modul, Analisis Wacana

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INTRODUCTION

Background

The rising cases of sexual crimes and misconduct among adolescents in Malaysia have become increasingly alarming. This includes a steady increase in cases of incest and rape, which rose from 1,261 in 2018 to 1,430 in 2023 (The Malay Mail, 2024). Various authoritative bodies, including ministries, government agencies, and NGOs, are making efforts to introduce SRH (sexual and reproductive health) education interventions, targeting either parents or adolescents, in an attempt to reduce these crimes and raise public awareness of the issue. Additionally, the threat of pornography among adolescents is becoming more concerning. Despite government actions to block over 1,000 pornographic websites, explicit materials remain easily accessible through social media platforms like X and Telegram (The New Strait Times, 2024). Therefore, the development of a comprehensive adolescent SRH module is crucial to ensure that training and guidance sessions for parents can effectively address these contemporary issues.

At the global level, SRH education is overseen by the International Technical Guidance for Sexuality Education (ITGSE). This monitoring body has developed an inclusivity checklist within their assessment tool, the Sexual and Reproductive Assessment Tool (SERAT) (UNESCO, 2018). However, the principles underpinning this assessment are grounded in Western human rights values, which often conflict with the religious principles and cultural norms of Malaysian society, particularly among Muslim parents. The literature on SRH education in Malaysia reported a variety of challenges influenced by socio-cultural and religious factors explore the difficulties faced by Malaysian parents in educating SRH to adolescent, emphasizing the need for culturally sensitive approaches (Abdul Hamid et al., 2020; Azira et al., 2020; Ghani & Awin, 2020; Sham et al., 2020).

The availability of local references on SRH education in Malaysia remains limited compared to international sources. One of the most frequently referenced works is the translated Arabic text *Tarbiyatul Aulad fil Islam*, which addresses sexuality education under the broader themes of social education and personal development (Zulaiha et al., 2019). In addition, *Formula Mudahnya Mengajar Pendidikan Seksualiti* book is a popular book that addresses how SRH education is integrated into various subjects in Malaysian schools, including Islamic studies, science, and health. It highlights the role of parental involvement and emphasizes Islamic views on gender interactions, personal boundaries, and modesty (Al-Jengkawi, 2020). Undeniably, at the government level, the development of the Reproductive and Social Health Education (PEERS) Module, a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Education Malaysia and the Ministry of Health Malaysia, has been utilized by teachers to deliver SRH education in schools. However, the module does not emphasize the role of parents in its implementation.

The *Cakna Diri* Module, selected as it is the only official parenting module by the government agency LPPKN. This module is a cornerstone in efforts to involve parents in discussions around sexual health, while advocacy for SRH continues to emphasize the need for culturally appropriate educational reforms across the Malaysian health system. Therefore, an evaluation of the core sexuality parenting module used by key agency responsible for adolescent SRH education in Malaysia is critically needed.

Cakna Diri Module

This module is the only one developed by *Lembaga Penduduk dan Pembangunan Keluarga Nasional* (LPPKN), a governmental agency that provides advice on policies and programs related to population, family development, and human reproduction. The agency is responsible for planning, implementing, and coordinating activities and programs in these areas (LPPKN, 2019). By examining this module, we aim to understand the extent to which it enhances parents' skills in providing sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education to their children, identify its strengths and weaknesses, and determine the key elements to be integrated into the development of an SRH education framework in Malaysia. In addition to using discourse analysis as the primary method of analysis, the researcher will also incorporate interview findings from the module's owners and trainers to achieve a more comprehensive understanding.

METHODOLOGY

For the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the *Cakna Diri* Module, the methodology involved several key stages. Data collection began with obtaining the module from the LPPKN, selected due to its status as the official parenting module employed by them. CDA is a research method that focuses on how language is used to construct and convey power, ideology, and social relationships (David Machin, 2012). It goes beyond examining language at a surface level, seeking to understand how discourse (written, spoken, or visual communication) shapes and is shaped by social and political structures.

The analytical framework was based on Norman Fairclough's CDA, which examines how language reflects and constructs power, ideology, and social practices (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Using this framework, the analysis focused on textual, visual, and discursive practices embedded in the module. In the contextualization phase, the socio-cultural and educational context of Malaysia was taken into account, including local attitudes towards sexual education and the roles of parents.

Finally, validation was conducted by triangulating findings with qualitative interviews from parents and discussions with module developers and trainers to gather deeper insights. This comprehensive approach ensured a thorough analysis of the module's discourse and its impact on Malaysian parental practices.

FINDINGS

The *Cakna Diri* Module comprehensively covers parenting sexuality, with a primary focus on adolescents aged 13-19, aligning with the dynamic phase of puberty. It comes in the form of A4-sized book-bound slides intended for trainers. Included in this book is a compact disc (CD) containing the presentation slides that will be used to teach parents about the module. The slides emphasize a proactive and morally grounded parenting approach tailored to address the challenges of adolescence effectively. The module highlights the significant influence of cultural values, religion, education, beliefs, and media in shaping the understanding of sexuality.

Title and visual representation of the module cover/slides cover

The choice of the title *Cakna Diri* (self-concern or self-awareness) reflects an emphasis on the adolescent's self-awareness. However, it is not explicitly clear which aspect of the self is being referred to, making this an example of a hedging lexical choice. Using indirect book title often to avoid definitive or absolute statements. According to David Machin (2012), the ambiguity may be intentional, allowing for a broad interpretation that could encompass emotional, physical, or psychological aspects of self-concern related to sexuality. The use of a silhouette image featuring women, men, kids, and a

baby suggests a representation of a complete and happy family (Figure 1). The woman throwing the baby into the air is a visual symbol commonly associated with joy, playfulness, and a positive family environment. The visual representation of a happy family may serve as a framing strategy to convey positive values associated with healthy family dynamics. The inclusion of diverse family members (women, men, and children) serves as an example of using contextual clues to reflect inclusivity and a broad understanding of family structures.
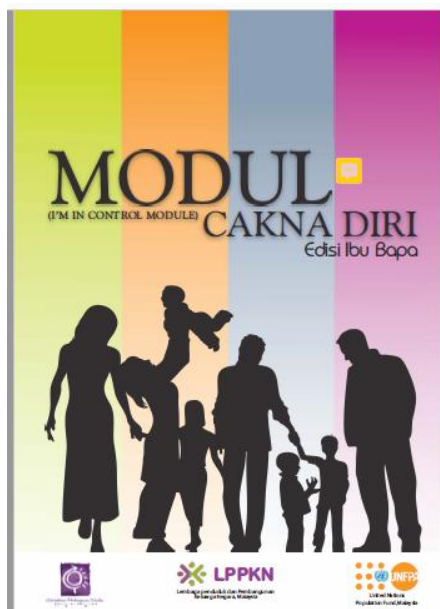

Figure 1: Cover page of the *Cakna Diri* Module

The Use of Real Photo

The use of a real photo emphasizes realism, potentially making the information more relatable and memorable. However, the lack of information on transmission may limit the educational impact, leaving questions unanswered for the audience. The absence of an explanation about transmission may leave the audience with incomplete information. To maximize educational impact, it is crucial to provide a holistic understanding of the condition, including how it spreads.

The lack of a full representation of the penis in the second photo raises concerns about clarity. To maximize educational impact, it may be beneficial to include a more comprehensive image that clearly identifies the organ and aids in understanding herpes infection symptoms in adults. The photo of the tongue with a watery lesion serves as a visual representation of one of the signs of syphilis infection. The use of a real photo adds a level of authenticity and immediacy to the presentation. The watery lesion on the tongue is likely to evoke a sense of discomfort and concern, emphasizing the seriousness of the symptoms associated with syphilis.
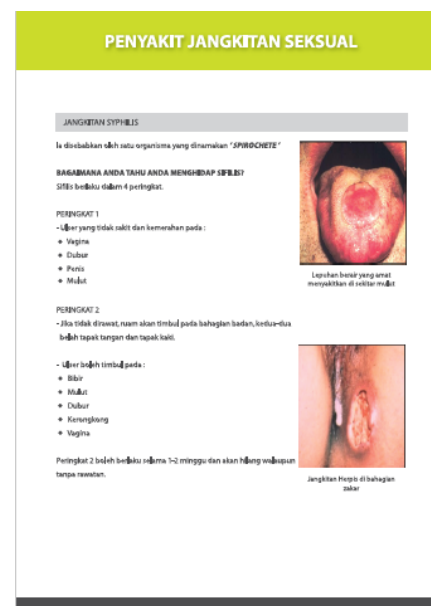

Figure 2: Sexually Transmitted Disease

The photo of the penis, albeit not comprehensive in capturing the entire organ, suggests an attempt to visually address the manifestation of syphilis in the genital area. The partial image may be a deliberate choice to balance the need for realism with the sensitivity of the audience.

The framing of the photo, particularly the decision to present only a partial image, raises questions about the intended focus. By not showing the entire organ, the presentation may be aiming to maintain a level of discretion or avoid explicit content while still indicating to the location of symptoms.

The Use of Rhetorical Devices

The use of rhetorical devices, as exemplified in the text "WALAU BAGAIMANA PUN IA DAPAT DIKESAN MELALUI UJIAN DARAH" (translated as "HOWEVER, IT CAN BE DETECTED THROUGH BLOOD TEST"), presented in all capital letters within an explanation about syphilis infection, can be analysed for various linguistic and discursive strategies. The use of all capital letters can be seen as a typographic strategy to emphasize and draw attention to a specific piece of information. In this case, the statement about detecting syphilis through a blood test is highlighted, possibly to underscore the importance of this method in diagnosing the infection.

Figure 3: The use of rhetorical device

The imperative tone in the sentence, marked by the use of uppercase letters and exclamation marks, indicates a directive and authoritative stance. This suggests a power dynamic where the speaker is positioned as an authority providing guidance. The sentence reflects certain ideologies related to health and morality. The emphasis on avoiding diseases is linked to a broader societal discourse on health and well-being. Additionally, the mention of "premarital sex" frames a moral dimension, suggesting a specific social norm or value system.

The sentence is placed just below a diagram listing multiple types of sexually transmitted diseases and their symptoms. This interplay with verbal discourse suggests a direct relationship between the warning and the information presented in the diagram. It frames premarital sex as a risky behaviour associated with the transmission of diseases. The sentence may influence readers by shaping their perceptions of premarital sex and STDs. It could contribute to the reinforcement of conservative views on sexual behaviour and morality, potentially influencing attitudes and behaviours related to sexual health.

In the given explanation, a crucial point is omitted – being unmarried is not the root cause of STDs; rather, it is the engagement in unprotected sexual intercourse that leads to these infections. Consequently, married couples need to be conscious of the potential infections they may face if they do not practice safe sex, as these infections can originate from their partners.

The discussion on rape, abortion and baby dumping

The statements collectively address various aspects of reproductive health, legal implications, and societal attitudes. In Malaysia, abortion without medical reasons is presented as a criminal offense, reinforcing legal and moral norms. Forced

abortion is depicted as causing detrimental health effects, contributing to a discourse on women's well-being. Teenage pregnancies are attributed to unwanted pregnancies, aligning with societal expectations and underscoring the need for comprehensive sex education. The statement on sexual relations with minors underscores legal protections for minors, emphasizing the importance of consent.

Medical examinations for victims are highlighted as crucial, reflecting a concern for their well-being and aligning with societal expectations for support and protection. Educating parents on these circumstances is imperative for fostering an informed and empathetic understanding. Comprehensive SRH education empowers parents to engage in open and supportive discussions with their children, addressing issues of reproductive health, consent, and the legal implications of various situations. This education helps parents navigate complex topics, reducing stigma, promoting healthy relationships, and contributing to the overall well-being of adolescents and young adults.

Figure 4: Typography of the word "rogol" in the discourse of rape

The highlighted term "ROGOL" in red, capital letters on the infographic poster signifies a strong discourse on sexual assault awareness. The poster's content, featuring sections on "KETAHUI FAKTANYA," "apa anda patut lakukan sekiranya dirogol," "JERAT ROGOL," and "TIPS KESELAMATAN DIRI," indicates a comprehensive approach to addressing sexual assault. The use of bold letters and visual elements draws attention to a critical societal issue, positioning the discourse as one that aims to educate and empower individuals. The depiction of a girl in a state of frustration or depression reinforces the severity and emotional impact of sexual assault, possibly emphasizing the need for support and awareness. The poster reflects a discourse that encourages knowledge, self-protection, and actions against sexual assault while acknowledging the emotional toll it can take on victims.

The poster featuring the bold words "PENGGUGURAN BAYI" (abortion) with accompanying explanations and a real photo of an aborted foetus in a palm reflects a specific discourse on the legal, medical, and emotional aspects of abortion. The bold lettering draws attention to the gravity of the topic, framing abortion as a legal offense in Malaysia. The explanations detail the potential physical and mental health risks associated with unsafe abortion, contributing to a discourse that discourages illegal and unsafe procedures. The inclusion of a real photo of an aborted foetus adds a visceral and emotional dimension to the discourse, possibly intending to evoke strong reactions and emphasize the reality and consequences of such actions.

The discourse seems to align with a perspective that aims to deter individuals from pursuing unsafe abortion practices by highlighting the legal and health implications, as well as the potential emotional toll. However, the use of such explicit visual elements may also be perceived as a strategy to evoke specific

emotional responses and shape public opinion on the topic of abortion.

Figure 5: The discourse of abortion

Discourse analysis of sexual threat alerts and cues among adolescents

In the context of the "AMARAN KUNING" (Yellow Alert) criteria for parents regarding teenage relationships and sexuality, power relations are evident in the positioning of parents as authoritative figures. Parents are assigned a role of influence and responsibility in guiding their teenagers, indicating a power dynamic where parental authority is acknowledged and emphasized. The discourse assumes that parents possess the knowledge and experience to advise and intervene in their children's romantic relationships, reflecting a societal expectation that parents play a central role in shaping the attitudes and behaviours of adolescents. This power relation emphasizes the significance of parental guidance in the context of cultural and societal norms surrounding sexuality and relationships in Malaysia.

The inclusion of AMARAN KUNING criteria in parenting sexuality in Malaysia is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it aligns with cultural and societal norms, providing parents with a framework to navigate discussions on sex and relationships. Secondly, it empowers parents to play an active role in guiding their teenagers, fostering open communication and trust. Thirdly, by addressing issues related to premarital sex, pregnancy, and STIs, the criteria contribute to the overall well-being of adolescents, promoting responsible sexual behaviour and reducing potential risks. Lastly, it acknowledges the importance of parental involvement in shaping the attitudes and behaviours of teenagers, reflecting a broader societal discourse on family values and relationships in Malaysia.

The warnings in AMARAN KUNING may indicate concerns about the potential for risky behaviours or situations, but they are presented with a lower level of urgency compared to AMARAN MERAH. Parents are encouraged to be vigilant and proactive in guiding their teenagers but may have more room for open communication and education rather than immediate intervention. Examples in AMARAN KUNING may include warnings about the potential for premarital sex, the need for caution in relationships, and the importance of parental involvement in teenagers' lives.
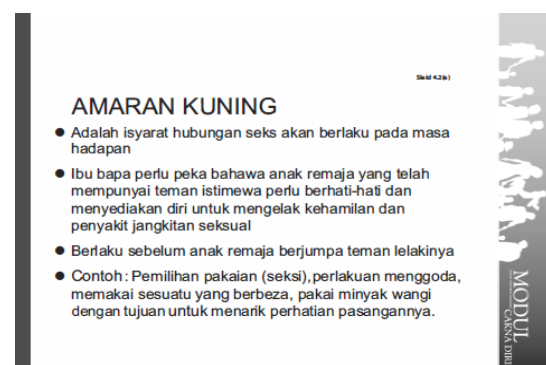

Figure 6: "Amaran Kuning" in monitoring adolescent behaviour

AMARAN MERAH addresses more serious or immediate concerns related to physical intimacy, explicit content consumption, substance abuse, and potential pressure from peers to engage in sexual activities. The warnings in AMARAN MERAH suggest a higher level of urgency, indicating that parents may need to take more immediate and decisive actions to address or prevent certain behaviours. Parents are positioned as crucial interveners with the power to recognize, respond to, and potentially halt specific actions or situations that pose a higher risk to their teenagers' well-being. Examples in AMARAN MERAH include warnings about increased physical intimacy, exposure to pornography, substance abuse, and the potential manipulation or pressure from peers to engage in sexual activities.

In essence, while both AMARAN KUNING and AMARAN MERAH emphasize the importance of parental guidance, the latter addresses more urgent and potentially harmful situations, requiring parents to be more proactive and assertive in their roles as protectors and educators. The distinctions between the two reflect a nuanced approach to parental involvement in guiding teenagers through the complexities of relationships and sexual development.

Simplifying a mind map by removing examples serves to enhance clarity, focus on core concepts, and reduce cognitive load. This approach allows for a more generalized framework, making the information accessible to a broader audience and encouraging critical thinking. By eliminating specific instances, the mind map becomes adaptable to various contexts and learning environments, facilitating user-friendly communication. The streamlined presentation is particularly beneficial for time efficiency and ensures that the audience can grasp fundamental ideas without being overwhelmed by

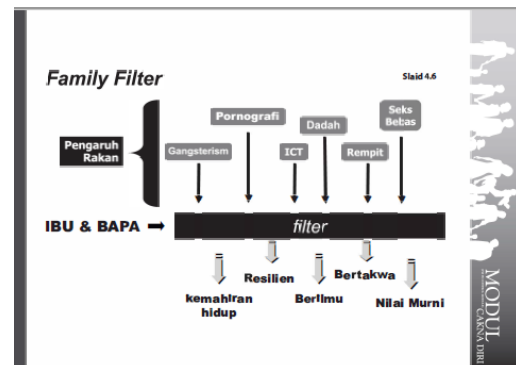details, promoting a more straightforward and effective conveyance of information.

Figure 7: The use of diagram to illustrate the role of parental guidance

The diagram illustrating parents as filters for shielding their children from negative elements and fostering positive attributes reflects a particular discourse on parental roles and influence. It signifies a power dynamic wherein parents are positioned as gatekeepers and educators, filtering out harmful influences from peers and channelling positive values to their children. The discourse assumes that parents have the ability to shape their children's character and protect them from societal risks. While the diagram emphasizes positive outcomes, it also reflects an implicit acknowledgment of potential external threats. The use of metaphoric terms like "filter" suggests a level of control and authority, aligning with societal expectations of parental responsibility in guiding their children toward resilience, knowledge, piety, and positive values. However, it may oversimplify the complexities of external influences and the challenges parents face, possibly reinforcing a prescriptive view of parental roles in shaping their children's character.

The advice provided for addressing adolescent desires in the described slides

reflects a discourse emphasizing parental guidance within a cultural and moral framework. Parents are positioned as mentors, tasked with helping adolescents understand and channel their lust and desire positively. The guidance underscores the importance of preserving purity, aligning activities with moral values, and promoting internal self-control. It advocates for parental awareness of their children's activities, open communication about positive and negative influences, and the establishment of rules to guide adolescent behaviour. The discourse emphasizes a proactive and morally grounded approach to parenting during the challenges of adolescence.

DISCUSSION

Suggestions for improving presentation quality and deliverability

Evaluation on the *Cakna Diri* module for parents, employing critical discourse analysis, provides insights into several proposed points of SRH education for parents in Malaysia. Through this study, several areas for improvement can also be identified. The module lacks a learning objective statement at the beginning of the slide presentation. A learning objective statement is crucial for course participants to understand the objectives and learning outcomes of the workshop using the module (Mitchell & Manzo, 2018). It is possible that these learning objectives were generally explained before the presentation began.

Some aspects of the SRH education module require further refinement to ensure clarity and comprehensiveness. For example, slides on children's developmental milestones lack the inclusion of estimated age ranges, which are essential for contextual understanding. Similarly, certain images depicting STDs are unclear and do not provide explanations regarding transmission methods, such as ocular infection pathways, potentially

leaving learners with gaps in understanding. These omissions can hinder effective learning, as clarity and relevance are vital when presenting information to adult learners (Knowles et al., 2014). Mdm. S, a facilitator of the parenting course, acknowledged that some parents were confused by the images presented during the sessions. Beyond feeling embarrassed, they struggled to quickly grasp the content of the images.

> *We have raised this issue with the module developers, noting that the images used in our materials are unclear. This has led to situations where some mothers ask questions, and we feel embarrassed to answer them...* (Mdm. S)

Given that this module is specifically designed for parents, who are adult learners, it is crucial to incorporate principles of adult learning. This includes providing clear, detailed, and practical information that aligns with their learning needs and real-life applications. Among those explained in the technical guidance provided by Federal Centre for Health Education or BZgA (2018) is that adult learning should be practical in nature. This is because training programs of this nature are usually optional for them. Therefore, their training needs to be practical and goal oriented. The content of this module should include case studies and practical examples that enable them to understand how specific skills significantly impact their delivery of SRH to their children. To enhance the module development process, a module acceptance study should be conducted, as recommended by (Matsuno & Israel, 2021).

Furthermore, the module lacks coverage on essential aspects, including elucidating the role of parents in setting examples to their children. Additionally, it omits discussions on pertinent contemporary concerns such as managing children's exposure to gadgets, addressing masturbation, homosexuality, and handling

issues related to pornography. Although might be considered as taboo, this topic must be conveyed in a manner consistent with Eastern societal norms (Foo, 2019). While these omissions are acknowledged, it is anticipated that subsequent modules or continuations of the program will address these topics comprehensively in the future.

Challenges in the implementation of the module

Parents' awareness of the importance of sexual education plays a crucial role in delivering reproductive health education. Therefore, parents' attitudes, understanding, and voluntary engagement are essential in providing exposure to their children regarding information and their sexual behaviours. The lack of awareness of adolescent SRH education among parents makes it difficult to obtain voluntary parental involvement when implementing such programs, especially in local community areas compared to programs conducted through agency involvement in workplaces. One of the LPPKN officers, Mdm. F, mentioned to the researcher that meeting with parents is a significant issue.

> *One of our problems is reaching out to our main target group, especially parents with kids who are having difficulties. It's really tough to get in touch with them—even when we try to set up meetings, it doesn't always work out. So, we've had to bring in outside help. Our program has ended up being more open because of this. What power do we have to compel parents to attend the program? We don't have any power.* (Mdm. F)

LPPKN employs various methods to garner interest and full commitment from parents to participate in the programs it conducts. Therefore, a variety of programs such as lectures, workshops, and parent camps are organized. However, expanding such programs requires continuous funding resources. Funding resources also pose a significant challenge in ensuring the sustainability of education delivered to parents. Furthermore, time constraints are also a limiting factor as most parents find it challenging to allocate time to participate in external programs due to managing household matters and work responsibilities.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the *Cakna Diri* Module extensively covers parenting sexuality, emphasizing the crucial phase of puberty. The module advocates for a proactive and ethically grounded parenting approach, recognizing the impact of cultural values, religion, education, beliefs, and media on sexual education. The content aligns with prevalent societal attitudes in Malaysia, emphasizing morality and religious values. However, there is a notable gap, as the module overlooks essential topics for parents with younger adolescents, such as safeguarding against child sexual abuse and addressing contemporary concerns like gadget use, masturbation, and pornography. Acknowledging these omissions, future modules are anticipated to provide a more comprehensive and inclusive sexuality education program.

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