

# Adolescent sexual permissiveness on the increase

Daily Express 1st Sept 1996

**It's an extremely worrying problem. But, better communication by adults and adolescents will help, apart from a strong upbringing and high moral values.**

**T**he patterns of sexual behaviour of adolescents have changed and there is a general rise in the sexual permissiveness worldwide, sparking off anxiety.

While the adult population is worried about this behaviour and spend their time discussing adolescent problems and deciding what's best for them, there is however very little involvement of adolescents themselves.

"It is important that adults involve adolescents as they are the parties concerned, otherwise it would be just a discussion confined to their peer group and leaving out most important group of people," says Rosnah Ismail, a lecturer in psychology at University Malaysia Sabah (UMS), at recent Sabah Family Planning seminar.

In her talk, she said that what appears to be lacking most is a sound education and understanding of sexuality and the consequence of these are adolescents who are ill-equipped to deal with the problems.

"A healthier relationship with parents and teachers, frank discussions and explanations will probably give better results than adult decisions and values transmitted to adolescents," she affirms.

Just like other parts of the world, Malaysia too has its fair share of adolescents involved in sexual activities.

Many factors have been blamed and among them are western influence, television programmes, access to literature and availability of contraceptives, to name some.

Sexual awareness occurs very early in childhood. As early as 3 to 4 years old, children are able to differentiate between male and female. They compare the absence and presence of certain structures in their body.

As the individual grows, he passes through a series of developmental stages in which his inherent biological

instincts are increasingly impinged upon him by his association with others, groups and societal institutions.

"Though entering adolescence, he is not mature sexually, but yet he is reproductively and genitally capable of reproduction. The strain of being physically ready for a heterosexual relationship and further encouraged and influenced by media, literature, television and even the permissive environment they live could all influence their behaviour.

"Unlike olden days, where dating was only permissible if chaperoned or till they are at least 18 years old, today's adolescents have a much earlier start," add Rosnah, who is also a counselor by profession.

Rosnah who has two teenage children, is married to marine biologist, Dr. Ridzwan Abdul Rahman. She is currently doing her PH.D in Psychology with UMS.

"Understanding and accepting them instead of condemning their values and behaviour would be better accepted by them. It's time that adults stop reflecting on their own adolescent stage and accept that society and environment has changed and with it the social norms and values," added Rosnah.

Statistics shows that sexual permissiveness is a problem that is encountered worldwide. Dating is starting at much

younger ages, premarital relationships are on the increase and so are adolescence pregnancies.

Among the reasons cited are that adolescents are physically ready for a heterosexual relationship but denied a legitimate outlet in the form of early marriage. Apart from the negative impact of literature and television, contact with the opposite sex with increasing frequency also causes sexual tension and thus follows the consequences of unharmed sexual urges.



**Rosnah Ismail...  
counselling will help**