

## Sexual Behavior in Adolescent Courtship, Exposure to Pornography, and Parental Sexual Communication

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The aim of this study was to find out the correlation between parent-child communication about sexuality and exposure to pornography with adolescent's sexual behavior in courtship. Participants were 551 adolescents (225 boys and 326 girls) who lived at Sukoharjo. Results show a correlation between parent-child communication about sexuality and Internet exposure to pornography and sexual behavior in dating. Implications of this study are discussed.

*Keywords:* courtship behavior, parental sexual communication, exposure to pornography

Penelitian ini bertujuan mengetahui korelasi komunikasi orangtua-anak tentang seksualitas dan paparan pornografi dan perilaku seksual remaja dalam berpacaran. Partisipan penelitian ini adalah 551 remaja (225 laki-laki; 326 perempuan) yang tinggal di Sukoharjo. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ada korelasi perilaku seksual dalam berpacaran dan komunikasi orang tua-anak tentang seksualitas dan paparan pornografi. Dibahas pula implikasi temuan ini.

*Kata kunci:* perilaku pacaran, komunikasi orangtua-anak tentang seksualitas, paparan pornografi

Dating is a normal behavior in teenagers. Youth dating behavior can be found in public places like city garden, mall, bus station, and so on. Data from Indonesian Birth Control Society (Perkumpulan Keluarga Berencana Indonesia/PKBI, 2001) on 2479 youngsters in five cities; Kupang, Palembang, Singkawang, Cirebon, and Tasikmalaya showed variations in teenagers' activities in dating like touching, kissing, petting, and copulating. Sexual intercourse in youngsters who dated was believed to be an expression of love. Meanwhile, another PKBI survey (Sugiarto, 2006) found that premarital sexual relation had begun as young as less than 18 years old. Teenage sexual behavior in dating was influenced by environmental conditions such as mass media, informational media, or education given by their parents. Mass media like television play a lot of adolescent life rich in romance. Internet is accessible to youngsters and it could become a good source for material of sexual development. Interview with youngsters showed that internet and pornographic VCD was becoming a source of reference for youngsters who want to know about sex (Anganthi & Lestari, 2007).

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Ideally, parents should take an active role in educating their children about sex, but in fact not all of them take their responsibility optimally. They tended to be waiting their children asking questions and not being proactive. In fact, Whitaker, Miller, May, and Levin (1999) stated that if parents could communicate with their children about sexual topics in a good atmosphere, this would influence their attitude toward sexual behavior. Based upon previous explanation, the research question was: would youngsters' dating behavior be influenced by parents-children communication about sexuality and pornographic exposure?

### Youngsters' Dating Behavior

Dating is a site for youngsters to express interests, feeling, and thoughts with sexual counterpart. Love and affection was expressed through words and actions in communication between partners. Communication between lovers was different from communication between non-lovers in the tendency to exaggerate the good side of their lovers and minimize the bad side. (Masters, Johnson, & Kolodny, 1991).

Sexuality of courtship is in analogy with dating. There were some reasons why people date (Bruess & Greenberg, 1981). First, dating was done for pleasure, usually done in spare time or when people need recreation. Second, dating was done for friendship in which someone felt happy being

close to someone he/she liked. Third, dating was done to get approval and appreciation. Walking together with his/her lover could make his/her friends jealous. Fourth, dating as sexual activity could cause enjoyment or pleasure. Fifth, dating was done for love, chance to give and take.

Dating is a form of sexual communication between an adolescent boy and girl or man and woman. The majority of Indonesian people think that premarital sexual relation between lovers is not appropriate, so sexual behavior during dating often becomes of a reflection of the standard of morality. Parents often feel worried if their daughters are involved in dating, and feel safe if they succeed in prohibiting their daughters to date. Parents tend to think that dating behavior is a risky behavior. So, it is important to study stages of sexual behavior in youngsters' dating.

According to the Diagram (1981), sexual behavior could be divided into several stages as follows: (1) looking at opposite body, talking without eye contact; (2) looking at opposite body, talking with eye contact; (3) talking of ideas, if compatible, the relation would continue, if not the relation would stop; (4) holding hands as the first physical contact; (5) embracing and making the bodies close; (6) embracing the waist; (7) kissing the lips; (8) hugging and kissing; (9) fondling and exploring the partner's body; (10) kissing partner's erogenous zones in nude; (11) touching of each other's erogenous zones; (12) copulating or sexual intercourse. These stages of sexual behavior were made as foundation in creating instrument to be used in this study.

## Pornographic Exposure

Global pornographic industry increased remarkably. According to Forbes magazine, capital flow reached 56 million dollars (Malamuth, Addison, & Koss, 2000). Results of surveys and studies indicated that pornography was accessed more by men than women. According to Werner-Wilson, Fitzharris, and Morrissey (2004), youngsters were active consumers of information delivered through radio, television, internet, and VCD. Weisskirch and Murphy (2004) showed that Internet satisfied the needs of sensation seeking in youngsters, like chatting rooms, gambling, interactive video, and streaming video (real time sexual appearance) or sex materials. Internet gave easy and fast access in finding many sexual information needed. Through the internet, individuals could access pornographic materials comfortably and anonymously (Wallace, 1999).

Wallace (1999) revealed that sex materials in the Internet were made sensual and hyperbolic. Sexual material could get in the email without notice. Anonymity and less responsibility in cyberspace contributed to

differences in character, usage, and effects on behavior. Pornographic material provision in the Internet was done in two forms: (1) commercial and (2) non-commercial. Commercial provision was done by free offering and free sample. But if consumers were interested, they were asked to pay through credit card. Interactive internet program offered a lot of erotic experience, in hot chat individuals could communicate with sex entertainers by writing texts. Live video enabled consumers to communicate through chat window. Non-commercial provision of sexual material was not profit oriented. Men and women were not payed to perform various sexual activities online. Advanced interactive video technology like *CUSeeMe* even enabled individuals to communicate interactively with other individuals. The interests of youngsters in sexual materials were correlated to stages of physical and psychological developments. Adolescence was signaled by changes in physical appearance and increased sex hormonal activities. Intensive sexual experience during adolescence increased interest on sexual information and materials. To satisfy their curiosity, they would find other sources of information such as magazines, tabloid, VCD and Internet, especially Internet because it provided many facilities.

Pornography is a media which explicitly contains sex and sexuality and its intention is to increase sexual passion of people who see it (Malamuth & Huppert, 2005). Pornographic exposure is defined as the action of getting in the x-sites and downloading sex pictures through file-sharing program in the Internet on purpose (Wolak, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2007). This condition is differentiated from pornographic exposure which is done not on purpose while adolescents were using Internet to send e-mail, browsing or chatting.

## Communication between Parents and Youngsters About Sexuality

According to Miller's study for 20 years, communication between parents and youngsters about sexual topics had a big role in understanding behavioral variations as well as attitudes of youngsters (Somers & Canivez, 2003), like attitude of not having premarital sex. Communication between parents and youngsters would influence youngsters' attitudes towards sex if it was done on a comfortable atmosphere (Whitaker, Miller, May, & Levin, 1999).

Fisher (1986) revealed that communication between parents and youngsters about sex was reciprocal information of ideas, with the purpose of influencing each other. Communication would go well if it was done in a democratic way. In this situation, youngsters were triggered to express

their opinions and thoughts about sex and parents could discuss it, so there would be openness between those two sides.

Children still need parental guidance in solving sexuality problems. Communication between parents and youngsters was an ideal educational model for youngsters to assure the norms of sexual behavior (Fuhrmann, 1990). In fact, there was a problem in communication and parents' attention that inhibited a good communication between parents and youngsters about sexuality. Jaccard, Dittus, dan Gordon (2000) revealed five causes why parents failed to do their roles in discussing sexuality with their children, namely: (1) parents did not have sufficient knowledge and skill needed to explain the sexuality materials, (2) youngsters did not pay too much attention to their parents, (3) parents and youngsters were not sure whether communication would bring any difference, (4) both sides had difficulty in finding the right time and place to discuss it, (5) parents were afraid that discussion would induce sexual drive.

Even if parents wanted to communicate with youngsters about sexuality, most parents tended to wait their youngsters to ask questions (Lestari & Purwandari, 2002). This condition made openness impossible and talking about sex would be considered taboo. Nowadays there are still parents and society that considers sex is taboo and not appropriate to be discussed or parents think it is not the right time yet. As a result, most youngsters do not have any opportunity to discuss sexuality with their parents, because the initiative should come from parents since the right time to discuss sexuality is before children grow up to adolescence.

### **Communication About Sexuality, Pornographic Exposure and Dating Behavior.**

During adolescence, reproductive organs become active and functional, and this condition triggers a sense of attraction toward opposite sex. This attraction is manifested by many forms of behavior, from paying attention to opposite sex behavior, physical contacts such as holding hands, sitting together, sharing stories, and so on.

Along with development of the sexual organ, youngsters' interest about sex also increases, but not with the expression; the older the children, the more they ask a little about sex because they are afraid about punishment and social disagreement (Hurlock, 1990). With this condition youngsters have inhibition to express their curiosity by asking their parents about it. To fulfill their needs and interests in sex, youngsters try to get it from the Internet even though information they get seems to be more of a stimulus than accurate and comprehensive so that they would be stimulated to make experiments in sex. The

expression of experimentation can be seen while doing interaction with girlfriends or boyfriends.

To explain the correlation of youngster dating behavior and pornographic exposure, the hypothesis of this study was: Is there any correlation between parents-youngsters communication about sexuality and pornographic exposure and youngster dating behavior?

## **Method**

The dependent variable in this study was dating behavior. The independent variables were pornographic exposure and parents-youngsters communication about sexuality. Respondents were randomly selected from five secondary schools (SMP and SMA) in Sukoharjo. From 905 respondents who filled out the instruments were classified into those who had experience in dating and those who did not. Five hundred fifty one respondents had dating experiences (225 boys and 326 girls with age span of 12-19 years old and mean = 15.4 years old). The data then was analyzed.

Research instruments:

- 1 Communication scale parents-children about sexuality to discover sexuality topics revealed by Somers and Canivez (2003) such as the origin of babies, male role in reproductive process, menstruation cycle, wet dreams, masturbation, courtship boundaries, petting, premarital relationship norm, the use of contraception, abortion, prostitution, homosexuals, AIDS, sexual assault, and rape.
- 2 Pornographic exposure scale that revealed accessing pornography from the Internet and what material has been accessed. Pornographic exposure revealed in this scale was getting in the pornographic sites and downloading sexual material from the Internet (Wolak, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2007). Respondents were asked how many times they accessed Internet per week, time spent online, the purpose of using Internet, sexual materials found. Respondents were divided into two divisions; have been exposed to pornography and have not been exposed to pornography on purpose.
- 3 Dating behavior included age beginning to date, the last boyfriend or girl friend status, length of dating time, and sexual behavior during dating. Dating behavior scale developed by Mayasari was used in this study (2000) in the form of Guttman scalogram consisted of 18 statements as elaboration of stages of sexual behavior revealed by The Diagram Group.

The data was analyzed by descriptive statistics and double regression analysis.

## Results

Results from double regression (see Table 1). From stepwise analysis, it is known that contribution of pornographic exposure toward dating behaviour is 3.3% (determination coefficient = .033) and communication between parents-youngsters contributes 1.4% (determination coefficient = .014). From descriptive analysis of the data, it was elaborated that:

### Beginning Age of Dating.

Five hundred and twenty two out of five hundred fifty one respondents (215 boys and 307 girls) wrote that beginning age of dating in boys were eight years old and 10 years old for girls. Mean age was 13.39 years old.

### Last Date Status

Last date status was useful in finding out how frequent teenagers changed their date. One hundred and eighty one boys and two hundred and forty eight girls gave information about last date status. Last date status varied, first engagement 24.5%, second engagement 18%, third engagement 11.6% and fourth engagement 13.6%, the rest is the fifth or more. The mean of engagement is 2.8.

### Engagement Length.

One hundred and eighty five boys and two hundred and seventy girls informed that the time span of engagement with the last person is less than one year (86.4%), 1-2 years (11.6%), 3-4 years (1.9%), and none was more than 4 years.

### Pornographic Exposure

Overall, 50% dating youngsters used to access pornography, more boys (66.2%) than girls (38%).

### Sexual Materials to be Accessed.

Sexual materials accessed by youngsters are in the form of pictures (illustration or photos), stories, moving pictures, video, or else (see Figure 1). Pictures are more liked by boys (56.4%) while moving pictures are more liked by girls (45.2%).

### Sexual Behavior While Dating

Picture of stages in sexual behavior while dating can be seen in Figure 2. More than 50% respondents stated that

their behavior had reached stage 9: cheek kissing. More than 25% teenagers stated that they kissed and hugged (stage 12) their dates. Different behavior between boys and girls happened in stage 10: lip kissing; stage 13, 14: breast touching. More boys had copulation with their dates, while in girls stroking genital although not in nude (1.2%).

## Discussion

Results of this study show that communication parents-teenagers about sexuality and pornographic exposure have correlation with dating behavior, if communication is not good behavior tends to be hotter than teenagers who have a good communication with parents. This study is in accordance with the study of Miller, Kotchick, Dorsey, Forehand, and Ham (1998) that stated sexuality discussion with parents could prevent early initiation of sexual activity and lessen risky sexual behavior in teenagers. Generally when parents communicate with their teens about sexuality, they also talk about moral values (Chung et al., 2005; Fisher, 1987). Chapman and Werner-Wilson (2008) also suggested that parents are important factor in forming attitude of teenagers toward sexuality.

Communication between parents and youngsters is low, empirical mean is lower than hypothetical mean (66.28 vs 97.5). In accordance with this, Lestari & Purwandari (2002) stated that only a few parents took their responsibility optimally as sex educators in conveying information and discussing sexuality topics with their children. Many parents are reluctant to talk about sexuality and think that sexuality is taboo (Faturochman, 1992).

Results of this study also show that parents give more attention to courtship boundaries and premarital sex than youngsters' sexual experience like wet dreams and menstruation. It means that parents stress more on good norms on courtship boundaries and inhibition. The practice of those norms and inhibition would be effective if the quality of parents-teenagers relationship was positive (Jaccard, Dittus, & Gordon, 2000; Whitbeck, Conger, & Kao, 1993). It means that teenagers who are satisfied with the relationship would pay attention,

Table 1  
*Result of Double Regression Analysis*

Variable	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Pornographic exposure	.186	.033	19.707	< .01
Pornographic exposure and communication about sexuality	.224	.050	14.443	< .01

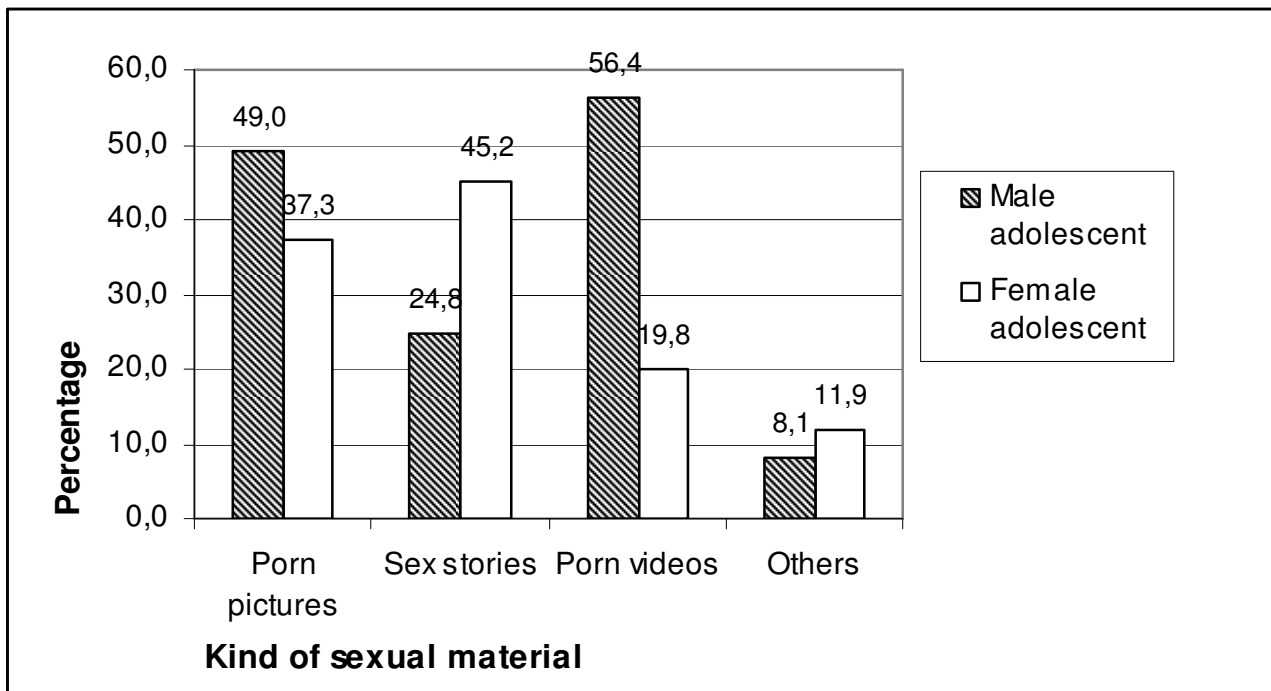


Figure 1. Kind of sexual material accessed by adolescents

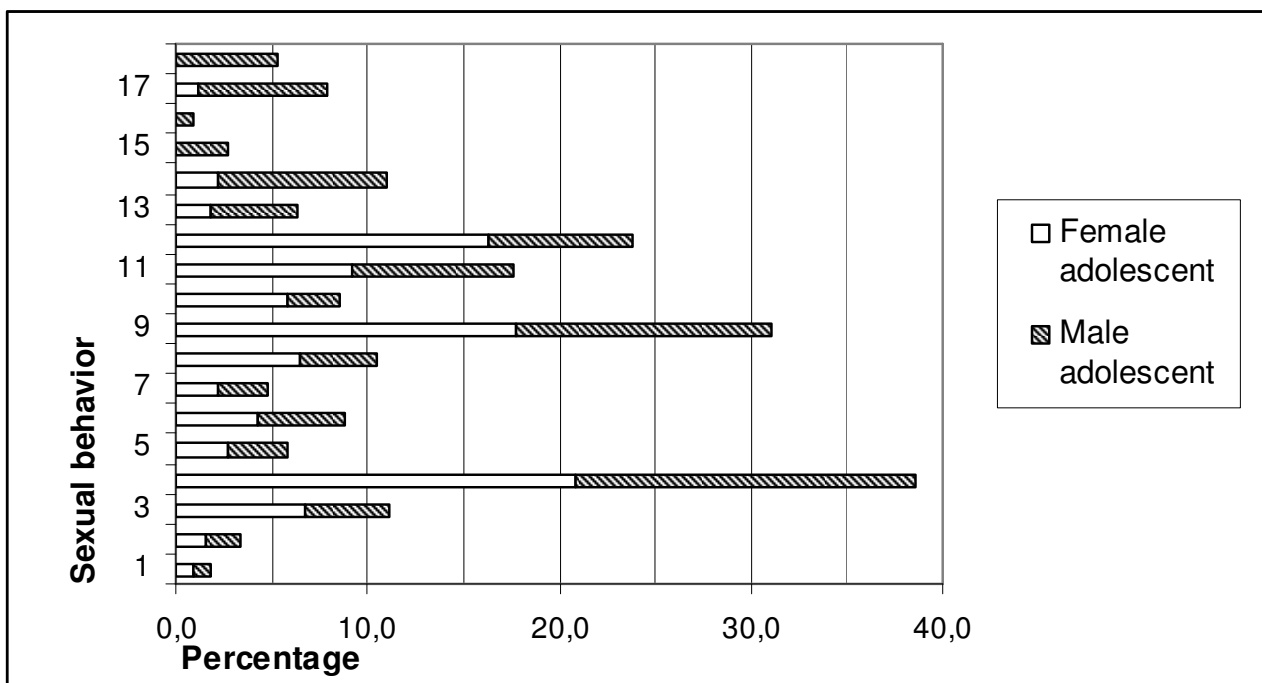


Figure 2. Adolescents' sexual behavior in courtship

process, and accept the information given. Communication with parents about sexuality should meet teenagers' need so that they do not go to other sources like peers (Lestari & Pratisti, 2008; Anganthi & Lestari, 2007) or the Internet (Lestari, Suparno, & Restu, 2010). This condition was

in accordance with Hurlock's elaboration (1990) who stated that teenagers' interest expression on sex decreased as a consequence of afraid of disapproval of the society. Accessing pornography informally and asking to peers was done to avoid social disapproval.

This study shows that pornographic exposure has a significant correlation with teenager dating behavior. Teenagers who have accessed pornography have higher stages of sexual behavior than those who have not. Weisskirch and Murphy (2004) stated that Internet could give satisfaction to teenagers' need and sensation, even searching sex oriented information in the Internet is considered the highest sensation. Stimulation and sexual arousal through Internet features could trigger teenagers to imitate while dating.

This study supports previous results that stated, more boys accessed pornographic sites in the Internet than girls. Boys liked sexual materials in the form of video while girls like in the form of stories. Possibly boys are more aroused by audio-visual stimulus while girls are more aroused by emotional stimulus like touching, flower, words, and imagination

Changing partners are common in boys or girls, and this phenomenon means that relationship with opposite sex is not stable and not accompanied by strong commitment. Sexual behavior in teenagers varied, starting from holding hands to sexual intercourse. Teenagers who did lip kissing were 38.8%. This condition indicates that their behavior will surely go to higher stage, sexual intercourse. Boys are more common in taking initiative.

Several studies found the significant role of parents as sex educators for their children. Increased frequency of communication of mothers and children and strong disapproval of premarital sex proved to postpone risky sexual behavior in teenagers (Hutchinson & Cooney, 1998; McNeely, Shew, Beuhring, Sieving, Miller, & Blum, 2002), whereas quality sexual communication enforced sexual abstinence and decreased sexual intensity and had a positive impact on teenage sexual behavior (Miller, Norton, Fan, & Christopherson, 1998).

Donnelly et al. (1999) stated that to change teenage behavior in order not to do sexual intercourse in early age can be done by first changing their attitude. Sexual abstinence in teenage could be done through a belief that premarital sex as an inappropriate action, only done by man not teenagers, and disapproval to a belief that sexual intercourse was normal. Santelli et al. (2006) showed that promotion of sexual abstinence alone was not enough to prevent active sexual behavior in teenagers. Comprehensive information about sexuality was still important to be given to teenagers so that they could behave responsibly in sexual courtship.

## Conclusion and Suggestion

Accessing pornographic sites in the internet and communication between parents and youngsters correlate significantly with teenage dating behavior, so

parents should be enforced to be proactive in increasing their knowledge about sex and communicating intensively with their teenage. Intensive program done by Lefkowitz, Sigman, and Auk (2000) for mothers who have youngsters proved to be successful in changing mothers' style in discussing sexuality. Mothers listened more to their teenage, asked with open questions, did not judge anything, and discussed more about dating and sexuality with their teens.

For further research, it is suggested that a deeper study can be done about teenage sexual behavior with risk and consequences taken into account. Consumption of pornographic materials can also be digged further, so the psychological dynamics of pornographic consumption can be explained more comprehensively.

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(Appendix follows)

## **Appendix**

### **Stages of Sexual Behavior**

1. Steal a glance to sensual parts of partner
2. Touching fingers or hand
3. Holding hands
4. Sitting side by side with partner with nobody else
5. Sitting side by side intimately with partner
6. Throw one's arm around shoulder and embrace partners body
7. Entwined and embraced partner's waist
8. Kissing/kissed on the forehead
9. Kissing/kissed on the cheek
10. Lip kissing
11. Hugging each other
12. Kissing while hugging each other
13. Touching the breast/being touched with clothes on
14. Touching the breast/being touched inside the clothes
15. Attaching the genital with clothes on
16. Attaching the genital with clothes off
17. Rubbing the genitals on the partner with clothes still on
18. Having intercourse