

Puberty Knowledge and Communication among Adolescent Sexual Offenders in Indonesia: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Introduction: Rape against women, as one of sexual assaults form, which has been became a serius issue throughout the world in social and public health. It is a gross violation on the women's human rights, which is can not be accepted from any perspectives. In the latest cases, the perpetrators of rape are conducted by adolescent or minor.

Purpose: This article presents the study how the young sexual offenders' knowledge on puberty and their sexual communication.

Method: This research was qualitative toward 30 sexual perpetrators, all informants are being undergone sentences in Correctional Institutions of Bengkulu province, Indonesia. The informants were all child convicts, (aged less than 18 years) at four correctional institution in Bengkulu province.

Results of the study: The perpetrators of sexual assault were middle adolescents who were in-between 16 to 18 years. Based on the results of analysis were found that there were ineffective sexual communication patterns among perpetrators, both informants communication parents, friends, teachers and couples. Moreover, this study found inadequate puberty knowledge among sexual offenders.

Research limitations: This article only describes sexual communication and knowledge on puberty, while other individual factors and social aspects are not discussed at all in this article.

Originality: Based on the various results of previous studies, there are no researches have been found that specifically examines the behavior of sexual violence by minors in Bengkulu province.

Keywords: *knowledge, puberty, communication, adolescent, sex offenders.*

Background

Sexual health is an important element for realizing the goals of reproductive goals. WHO (2002) defines sexual health as the welfare state of physical, emotional, mental and social in relation to sexuality, it is not only the absence of disease, dysfunction or weakness. Sexual health requires a positive approach and respects for sexuality and sexual relations; the possibility of pleasant sexual experience, safety, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. Therefore, sexual health must be achieved and maintained, and all people's sexual rights must be respected, protected, and fulfilled.

Women and men implicitly have the same rights to achieve a healthy sexual status without violating others sexual rights or outrage the law.

Some researches, the sexual harrassments such as rape against women is a serious problem that demands massive cost consequences due to depressive events, unwanted pregnancy and HIV/AIDS virus ^[1]. Many of health problems arevcaused by the sexual violence, these are not only a concern on criminal law throughout the world, but also the field of public health ^[2].

The sexual aggression is rampant by perpetrators under age group 18 years as an illustration of the

low quality of sexual health understanding among young adolescent. It is because the sexual behavior plays important role in producing mental and social health outcomes. But, now there has not been found a theoretical or conceptual model that is fully able to explain the relationship between sexual behavior and various aspects of health [3].

Method

Design and participants

This research used qualitative method toward 30 male adolescent less than 18 years who were the perpetrators of rape. All respondents are being undergone sentence at four Correctional Institutions of Bengkulu province.

Data collection

This research conducted within 6 months from 24 May to 26 October 2019, through semi-structured interview manner. This model is conducted with face to face interview, and strongly believed able to explore more profound exposure among each respondent. This manner will be a bridge for exploring various experiences and places within more specific context, thus allows informants (perpetrators) to re-construct their experience more details.

Data Analysis

Data analysis and theoretical interpretation refer to the formulation of research problem: how the forms of communication are conducted by the perpetrators and how the knowledge of informants on puberty. Analysis and interpretation of the data in this study was carried out by providing interpretation and production process of meaning of the text of the interview with the informant and comparing it with various studies and previous studies.

Ethical Clearence: The ethical clearence for this research was taken from Ethic Committee of Health Research Faculty of Nursing, Airlangga University with ethical approval numbers 1278-NREC.

Findings

Based on the semi-structured interview manner toward child sexual offenders, our analysis have narrowed down into two issues on sexual coercion by child offenders are knowledge on puberty and sexual communication. The cases above are not spontaneously,

but as a combination of problems that are being experienced by perpetrators, family background and external influences as well from their peers or environment. As a prepubescent group, most of their attitudes are still unstable and fragile, as a result these trigger their sexual offending like rape or other sexual harrassment forms.

Knowledge on Puberty

Majority informants usually got the knowledge in term of puberty from schools; through biology subject and counseling program by health workers. Moreover, they also admitted due to the peers and older friends. Their knowledges were the puberty signs between men and women; they mentioned several signs of puberty in men, such as wet dream, Adam's apple, mustache and beard. In women, it is usually marked by the arrival of menstrual period and enlarge breast size. However, they have wrong understanding on puberty signs; enlargement of breast size on women due to the factors often touched by opposite of sex. This reflects that sexual health of informants in term of puberty is still low. In addition, they do not know what have to do when at their puberty. The low understanding on puberty is due to there is no any program that more specific contains about puberty education both males and females. As a result of this, young adolescents have not ready yet to undergo pre-puberty and puberty period as well.

One of the main reasons why many of young adolescents have deviant sexual behavior, for instance rape, it is due to the influence of peers, because peers can activate the 'reward system' in adolescents' brain. The change of brain function creates psychological vulnerabilities, which can contribute to behaviors that endanger health and enhance emotions. At the same time, brain plasticity combined with social and cognitive change make adolescents' thinking and false behavior which further have significant implication for future of health and welfare^[4].

Meanwhile, in adolescents puberty, there is a change in the hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) system, which make adolescents more vulnerable to get stress^[5]. It also has a profound affect on their vulnerability to get depression and serious health problems in the future^[6]. Physical, emotional, and social changes in puberty can cause them to become stressed, especially when they feel misunderstood or have inadequate coping skills. Adults, within puberty period need to explain the problems of

puberty, emotional change and the importance of peers as part of puberty education, all are aimed at normalizing change, reducing stress, ensuring healthy choices, [7]. At this time, the puberty rises faster than before, for instance, the breast enlargement on females were at the age of 8 or 9 years, while the development of genital organs on males begun at the age of 9 or 10 years [8].

The cases above indicate the necessity a puberty education system based on the stages of child development. At pre-puberty, teens need enough information to face several changes during puberty. While, adolescents who have experienced on puberty, they need more information and strategies for facing these changes^[4].

Sexual Communication

Communication with parents

The sexual communication practice is still rarely done openly within the family of informants; either parents or other family members. The pattern of communication are quite monotonous and in one-way communication toward older and younger persons. The talks model are between parents and informants were only shortly and allowed to discuss about general things, such as taking a bath order (Islamic belief), dating prohibition and having sex with a couple. Informants were only prohibited without being accompanied by discussion and explanation why this should be done or prohibited. This communication form allegedly rises the causative factor of deviant sexual practices among informants, for instance rape. Some previous researches have pointed out that open sexual communication between parents and young adolescents can be significant protective factor to reduce the risks of sexual behaviors by putting off intimate relationship and increase the frequency of contraception and condom use [9]. This finding is reinforced by the results of a meta-analysis of 50 studies that confirm that parent-teen sexual communication is positively associated with safer sex behavior. Thus emphasizing the importance of understanding parental communication as a possible predictor that contributes to teenage sexual decision making [10].

Sexual communication between parents and children has an important role to realize sex education on children. Previous research has shown that adolescents relationships with their parents influence interactions with peers. This is because the quality of adolescent

relationships with friends that develops in early life as the result of socializing experiences within family [11]. Adolescents who have supportive values and warm relationship are more socially competent and report/tell more positive friendships [12].

This research found the reasons of sexual assault including rape, because it was influenced by friends and could not control the lust. Similarly, Reeb who explained sexual behavior generally occurs when adolescents begin to have romantic relationships. During this time, parents may be able to influence life style choices positively or negatively by discussing their behavior [13]. Parents are expected to be able to play an important role for transmitting reproductive health information and skills on adolescents to ensure they can grow and achieve reproductive and safe sexual lifestyles [14].

Sexual communication with friends.

During the transition period, children tend to spend more time to be alone and with friends, on the other hand, time with parents will decrease significantly [15]. This research found that sexual communication that occurs between informants and friends is more directed to the topic of sexual relations, pregnancy and pregnancy prevention. At the developmental stage as early adolescents, they are usually more open to friends than parents to discuss topics relating to sex [9].

The negative impact found in communication between informants and friends, there were wrong understanding among informants related to sexuality issues, related to some information obtained from friends. Some of these myths, among others: sexual intercourse will certainly cause a pregnant woman, it is not possible to only have sex once can cause the victim to become pregnant. Besides being related to the process of pregnancy also found myths of female reproductive organ development, especially the size of the breast with sexual behavior. Another myth related to pregnancy termination efforts, is by consuming foods such as pineapple or coffee mixed with soft drinks.

Friends can be an increasingly important source of information and become a critical social reference for adolescents [9]. This condition can become a problem when friends who are partners within discussion also have an inadequate level of knowledge, so that it can provide wrong knowledge and understanding.

Sexual Communication with teachers at school.

Sexual communication was not specifically carried out but only became part of the subject matter at schools such as Biology and Islamic Religious Education. Information on sexuality was only obtained by informants when they are at the second and third grade of high school. The conditions revealed the contradictory results as mentioned by Butler 'school-based sexuality education' is believed to be the ideal context for teaching sexual communication skills on children and adolescents in the context of developing and practicing the use of these abilities. For example, from sexual education at schools, students can get training and instruction on how to communicate with parents regarding sexual issues [16].

This study found that informants obtained information related to sexuality, such as puberty, fertilization and infectious diseases when they were at second and third grade high school, while sexual behavior was formed earlier when they are at primary school. These conditions, it is necessary to provide sexual communication services that are tailored to the stage of child development. As stated by Crockett, et al (2019). Pre-puberty teenagers need enough information to deal with the various changes they will face when puberty comes, while in puberty teenagers, they need more in-depth information and strategies to be able to adapt to these changes (4).

Sexual Communication with Girlfriend

Sexual communication with their romantic partner are done *face to face* and through social media. Their conversation usually leads to the theme of sex. In some cases, sexual communication has become one of the triggers for sexual relations and rape by informants. There are three factors that influence the openness of early adolescent sexual communication with a couple namely length of relationship, relationship satisfaction and commitment [17]. Another phenomenon as seen from this research, the habit of having sexual communication with couples through social media *What's up* and *Facebook*. This finding is similar to Jeff Temple' idea on *Sex* and *Chatting*, which are often used by adolescents, it is well-known 'sexting'. Sexting in adolescents is an important issue of public health because it can have negative psychological and legal consequences [18]. Such behavior is consistently related to adolescent sexual behavior [19]. Other researchers mentioned adolescents who have sexting have the possibility to have sex 7

times more when compared to those who are not abusers [20]. In addition, sexting also depicts adolescent sexual behavior in daily life [18].

Conclusions and Further Research

The communication practice in term of sexuality is still rarely done openly between parents' informants. Communication that occurs between informants with friends, more leads to the theme of sexual relations. Communication with teachers is not done specifically but only becomes part of the material in one of the subjects at schools. While, the informant's communication with a girlfriend is done directly or through social media. Their conversation was more about the theme of sex and in some cases became one of the triggers for rape. This research is only limited to sexual communication and knowledge on puberty. For the future studies may need to be conducted on sexual health practices, such as the use of condoms to prevent unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

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