

Between Curiosity and Love: The Meaning of Premarital Sexual Behavior for Students in Malang City

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Abstract - Sexual behavior is considered as contemporary activities and become part of adolescence lifestyle. The substance of this study reveals the meaning of sexual behavior in the students of university perspective. The research design used was interpretive by referring to George H. Mead's symbolic interactionism theory. Data collection techniques using in-depth interviews and observation to students in the city of Malang.

The results of this study show the meaning of sexual behavior for adolescents, namely: (a) practicing curiosity; sexual behavior to reach adolescent sexual maturity (b) proof of masculinity; to show courage, (c) proof of love; willingness to have sex with a partner (d) part of a youthful pleasure; as one of the activities to get pleasure in the present. This paper recommends that sexual behavior among adolescence, especially students, should be of particular concern to universities so that these activities can be suppressed. Then, sex education should be taught early so that adolescence understand sex behavior in detail.

Keywords: *Sexual Behavior, University Students, Premarital*

I. INTRODUCTION

Changes in information technology lead to social change, including the behavior of adolescents who tend to intersect with sexual behavior [1]. About one-third of unmarried North Ethiopian students have active sexual activity, the findings of study show that 36.1% of female students in Woreta city, and 12.6% of female student schools in Addis Ababa have experienced sexual intercourse [2]. More than 20% of active students in the United States have engaged in sexual activity every month [3]. In Hong Kong, adolescence sexual behavior and intentions increase from time to time along with the development of adolescents, adolescents with established lives with positive development processes tend to reduce their sexual activity [4].

Various studies have been carried out to understand the conditions of premarital sexual activity, in Ethiopia, there are 70.53% of students who actively engage in sexual behavior, as many as 54.8% have sexual activity within the last 3 months [5]. In Ghana, sexual behavior has been carried out by 33.5% of adolescence, as many as 32.5% have more than one sexual partner [6]. In Indonesia alone, as

many as 38.3% of students reported having had sexual intercourse and 36.5% of them had their first sexual intercourse before 15 years of age with the reason of doing so because of sexual desire, curiosity and expressing love [7].

Sexual intercourse in adolescence is a normative thing, but still has risks [8]. The low level of household life is a trigger for increased sexual behavior of adolescence [9]. Sexual behavior arises because of the experience of sexual abuse experienced in childhood [10]. In general, other factors that can influence sexual behavior are the level of individual masculinization [11]. The low ability of self-control also has an impact on increasing sexual behavior [12]. Some things that play a role in increasing sexual behavior, among others; age, not attending school, orphanage, social status, low economic level, and drinking alcohol in the last 30 days [13]. Playmates, demographics and campus environment are other factors that influence sexual behavior [14]. Peer group understanding and habits strengthen the urge to engage in sexual activity in adolescents [15].

Sexual behavior correlates with a series of problematic behaviors that can have an impact on psychosocial health, such as having multiple sexual partners, drug use and antisocial behavior [16]. The meaning of sexual activity has been expanded in recent years, sexual behavior is considered as part of the usual activities commonly carried out [17]. Sexual behavior is traditionally seen as the natural point of all sexual contact between a man and a woman [18]. Sexual behavior is not interpreted as sex but as a sexual situation, namely sexual activity but not sex in a negative connotation [19].

Sexual problems have a detrimental effect on the quality of an individual's life and have an impact on mental health or self-esteem, which can further cause emotional distress, and in some extreme cases lead to separation [20]. Some particular health issues are concern to people who actively engage in sexual activity, which can damage health and well-being, and cause a lot of mortality and morbidity in adolescents [21]. On the other hand, sexual behavior has an indirect effect, namely physical violence on women [22].

Sexual activity also raises a number of problems in people's lives, several problem is half of pregnancies in the United States (US) are not planned, unwanted pregnancies are a very important concern and must be given solutions by health practitioners and policy makers [23]. Another fact is the increased of sexually transmitted diseases infections and unwanted pregnancies and ultimately, alcohol and marijuana consumption are higher effect as a result of sexual behavior [24]. In Cameroon, sexual behavior is carried out by adolescents who have low knowledge of the risks that can arise, such as HIV and higher pregnancy [25].

Various studies on the meaning of sexual behavior have been carried out, including; study in Sweden about the meaning of sexual behavior for students under the age of 14 [16]. Studies in Australia reveal parents' understanding of sexual behavior in children and adolescents [26]. Furthermore, studies in Ghana found that sexual behavior has a broader meaning than just a traditional relationship between a man and a woman [18]. Previous research used the subjects of elementary school students, school-age adolescents and adults.

While this study focuses more on students as subjects in research because they are considered as *agents of change* for the present and the future. Muslim students are chosen as representatives of Muslims who are the majority of the Indonesian population. On the other hand, campus or college is considered a "sex market" for students to seek sex partners [14]. The closeness of students to sexual behavior makes the study of sexual behavior among adolescents interesting to study. This is what underlies the writing of this article and has the purpose of analyzing the meaning of sexual behavior in the perspective of students.

The study of the meaning of sexual behavior among adolescents is understood using George Herbert Mead's symbolic interactionism theory. According to him, in forming and managing interpersonal relationships and social groups, humans use communication that begins with themselves (*self*) and always involves other people or society (*society*) in a broad context, and there must be a process of understanding (*mind*) in the communication [27].

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a qualitative research using George H. Mead's interpretive design. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and observations of Muslim premarital undergraduate students at universities. The informant is Syukur (Undergraduate students of UIN Malang), Ulum (UM Undergraduate Students) and Adinata (UB Undergraduate Students). Data analysis techniques refer to Edmund Husserl's opinion. According to him, the data analysis process has three stages: (a) *bracketing* (epoche), revealing reality (phenomenon) without preconception; (b) *eidetic vision*: sorting out important aspects to be formulated into meanings, and grouped into specific themes; (c) *Weseinchau*: synthesized stage into narrative description [28].

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. *The Meaning of Sexual Behavior Sexual*

Sexual behavior is considered as a manifestation of the biological need to carry on offspring or part of looking pleasure. This study identifies the meaning of sexual behavior according to the student's perspective, and is grouped as follows; practice curiosity, proof of manhood, proof of love, and as a pleasure in youth.

1) *Practicing Curiosity*

Teen as a phase of life which have high curiosity characteristics. Adolescence curiosity reaches all aspects of life, including the desire to know sexual activity. Like the following:

"... Sexual activity arises as a form of curiosity about sexual behavior reflected in the media, both TV, film, the Internet and so on. Initially trying to hold the girl friend's hand, she just kept quiet. Then I proceed to touch on the others, and continue ..." (Ad & Sy).

The word *curiosity* shows that there is an assumption that adolescence have a high curiosity about sexual activity. This is in accordance with WHO's opinion on the stages of adolescent development, this phase has a great curiosity on sexual maturity. In today's modern era, adolescence' curiosity on sexual activity is no longer a taboo matter.

The narrative of "*arises as a form of curiosity about sexual behavior reflected in the media*" seems to explain the media to be one of the tools that influence curiosity in adolescent sexual behavior. In the current era of globalization, almost all media shows contain sexual content, ranging from the smallest things such as holding hands to adult sexual activity. Impressions that display sexual activity foster the desire of adolescence to learn more about sexual activity.

On the other hand, the narrative of "*holding a girl friend's hand and being quiet*" shows the difference in values between sexual activity between the present and the past. For the traditional Javanese community, holding hands is an unnatural thing to do before having a marital status. The existence of relationships such as sexual activity between men and women allowed through sacred rituals. Currently, holding the partner's hand seems to be an ordinary activity.

If it is seen from the norm about sexual behavior in the Java region that believes sexual behavior may be carried out by married couples, it turns out that there has been a shift in these norms. Initially sexual behavior became part of domestic life, now the stage *courtship* has been used by adolescence to carry out these activities. Adolescence do not wait to have official status for sexual behavior.

Another view to understanding adolescence sexual activity can use Mead's opinion. According to Mead, a person's behavior arises because of three factors, namely *mind*, *self* & *society* [27]. *Society* (society) influences the *mind* to do something. In this case, the media as a *society* display sexual content and influence teen curiosity (*mind*) on sexual activity. So that

adolescence (*self*) have an understanding that sexual behavior is a natural thing to do. *Girlfriends* or close friends who are normal when invited to engage in sexual activity also further encourage adolescence' desire to carry out these behaviors even further.

2) *Proof of Masculinity*

Sexual behavior is closely related to masculinity. In Javanese society, the context of masculinity men is considered; (1) family leaders, (2) have children, and (3) be responsible. However, masculin men, according to adolescents, are men with the power of vital devices that are proven through sexual activity. Like the following Ulum and Adinata narration:

"... Sexual behavior as evidence that a person has a powerful genitals, is not impotent. This woman needs to be happy, one of the happiness of a woman is having a partner with a powerful genitals ..."

A statement of *vitality of a genitals* shows the assumption that sexual behavior carried out by a teenager aims to prove his might as a real man. The evidence also has implications for the recognition of peers.

The statement of *one of the happiness of a woman is having a partner with a powerful genitals* shows that according to adolescents, couples can be blessed by men who have mighty vital tools. However, for the Javanese community, women do not pursue sexual satisfaction, for happiness is obtained from the attention and care of the couple.

In line with Mead's opinion that a person's behavior (*self*) is formed based on understanding (*mind*) from interaction with society (*society*). In this case, the *society* Mead meant was friendship. Friendships that consider men to have mighty vital devices cause members of the friendship to engage in sexual activity to be recognized as part of the group. Likewise with the concept of how to achieve happiness according to adolescents, this understanding (*mind*) is obtained by adolescence (*self*) as an accumulation of interaction with friendship (*society*).

3) *Proof of Love*

Globalization has reached the lives of adolescence in the context of sexual behavior. In the past, love was proven through giving sincere care and concern. However, for today's adolescence the size of proof of love has developed into a willingness to engage in sexual activity with a partner. Like the following opinion of Ulum:

"... Doing sexual activity because the couple gives choices, namely to separate or be together but want to engage in sexual activity ..."

This opinion is in accordance with Gratitude:

".... Love needs to be shown, wrong one proof of love is fulfilling the desire (sex) of a partner. When you love, whatever is asked must be done. Including doing sexual behavior with a partner ..."

Based on the data above, said *as evidence* showing the desire of a partner to prove his love by engaging in

sexual activity. For today's adolescence, feelings of love are not sufficiently proven only by speech, caring and caring, but adolescence's demand that couples engage in sexual activity as evidence of love.

This is very different from the traditions in the past Java. In the past the Javanese people felt loved even though only through seduction. However, now love demands proof from a partner. One of the common proofs for adolescence today is to engage in sexual activity. This finding is in accordance with the results of a study which states that sex is part of love [8]. Today, love is identical to having sex.

For Mead, a person's behavior arises because of three interrelated things, namely *mind, self & society*. In this case, adolescents as *self*, have an understanding (*mind*) about sexual behavior to prove the feeling of love from interaction with a partner (*society*). The interaction between adolescence and their partners results in an understanding that sexual behavior can prove love.

4) *Sexual Behavior as Youthful Pleasure*

For modern society, sexual behavior is a part of life. This behavior becomes an activity of adolescence to get pleasure, no longer a sacred activity that can be done after having a marital status. Like the following Gratitude:

"... Sex is done for fun. It's good to be able to execute sexual desire that is usually buried. As is usually done by friends ..."

This was confirmed by Adinata's opinion:

" Adolescence is spent life to do sexual activity. One of them is doing sexual activity. Like today's adolescence ..."

Ulum's opinion is also:

" ... Friends' assumption that students who do not engage in sexual activity mean they have not become students who enjoy their time. Still a schoolboy ..."

A statement of *pleasure in youth* shows that sexual behavior is a way of today's youth to have fun. For Javanese people, sexual behavior is not an activity that adolescence can do to have fun. However, now adolescence consider these activities as one way to have fun.

Another statement that conveyed *as usually done by friends*. The word gives an assumption that sexual behavior has become a common thing for adolescence in the city of Malang. The thing that is considered normal by the friendship environment strengthens the stigma for adolescence to engage in sexual activity. These findings are in accordance with studies that prove that the environment plays an important role in building one's habits [29].

Mead's opinion states that a person's behavior comes from 3 factors, namely *mind, self & society*. Understanding (*mind*) of adolescents that sexual behavior as a form of pleasure in their youth arises because of the dialectical process of their own (*self*) after interacting with the environment (*society*) which considers sexual behavior as part of pleasure in youth.

This understanding has a strong impact in building the concept of adolescent sexual behavior. Adolescence who have a strong interaction with the environment, over time consider sexual behavior to be an activity to get pleasure in the present.

From all the results and discussions above, it can be understood that the environment plays an important role in building the concept of sexual behavior for adolescents. In accordance with Mead's opinion stating to forming and managing interpersonal and social group relations, humans use communication that begins with themselves (*self*) and always involves other people or society (*society*) in a broad context, and there must be a process of humans understanding (*mind*). In this case, adolescents as (*self*) build understanding (*mind*) that sexual behavior as an activity for fun is obtained from interaction with the community and media (*society*).

IV. CONCLUSION

Sexual behavior is considered as an activity that is closely related to the social phenomena of adolescence today. The results of this study show four meanings of sexual behavior according to adolescents; (a) practicing curiosity; sexual behavior to achieve adolescent sexual maturity (b) proof of masculinity; sexual behavior to show courage, (c) proof of love; willingness to have sex with a partner (d) part of a youthful pleasure; as one of the activities to get pleasure in the present. In essence, all the meanings of sexual behavior according to adolescence converge into one goal, namely to achieve pleasure. Understanding pleasure in the minds of students is built because of strong interaction with the environment.

This paper recommends that sexual behavior among adolescence, especially students, should be of particular concern to universities so that these activities can be suppressed. Then, sex education should be taught early so that adolescence understand sex behavior in detail.

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