

FACTORS TRIGGERING PSYCHOSEXUAL BEHAVIOR AMONG TEENAGERS: A STUDY AT A DETENTION AND REHABILITATION CENTER IN KUALA LUMPUR

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the factors that trigger psychosexual behavior among teenagers. This study employs qualitative case study with purposive sampling for the participants selection. The focus group discussion had been conducted among 7 female teenagers. Members of the institution's staff have also been interviewed to support and increase the data richness using semi-structured interview and all the sessions were recorded and transcribed. The results revealed that peers, social media, and digital media are the three main factors that trigger psychosexual behavior among the teenagers. It is recommended that future studies focus on more participants of different races from correctional institutions that exist in Malaysia for significant effects on the findings.

Keywords: Teenager, social delinquency, psychosexual behavior, peers, social media, digital media

1. INTRODUCTION

The involvement of our adolescents in social delinquency activity is seen as tumor cells spreading into the human body. Our adolescents' involvement in social delinquency is compared to tumor cells spreading throughout the human body. There is currently no single solution or method for preventing these issues from spreading widely. Illegal racing, smoking, gangsterism, bullying, free sex practice, unplanned pregnancy, illegitimate child, drug abuse, child abandonment, and sexual assault are examples of social delinquencies involving today's youth. However, findings from the study have suggested that keeping young people in school can serve as a strong protective factor that serves to prevent at-risk students from moving along the trajectory of serious delinquent behaviors (Tan, Zuraini & Noor Banu, 2019).

According to Teo (2018), the 2015 Malaysian Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health Survey revealed that sexually active teenagers have a low level of awareness and knowledge about sexual intercourse, pregnancy prevention, and sexually transmitted diseases. As a result of this, psychosexual behaviors among teenagers may exist (between 13 to 17 years old).

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines a teen pregnancy as "one in which the mother's age is between 13 and 19." (Salbiah, 2019). According to WHO (2018), "each year, 16 million

girls aged 15 to 19 years and 2.5 million girls under the age of 16 give birth in developing countries." Complications during pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death in 15 to 19-year-old girls worldwide" (WHO, 2018).

Dr. Aizura Syafinaz (as cited in Salbiah, 2019) pointed out, "teenage mothers (with little or no prenatal care were at greater risk of having medical complication as] the girl is more likely to develop pre-eclampsia, a severe condition associated with high blood pressure". "The incidence of cesarean section was higher in teenage mothers because the pelvic bones do not reach their maximum size until the age of 18, thus the pelvis of the teenage mother may not have grown enough to allow vaginal delivery of a normal size baby," she added. Teenage mothers were more likely to experience postpartum depression, which can lead to severe depression, including suicidal and filicidal (thoughts of killing one's own offspring) ideas and attempts (Lum, 2018).

Mohamad Shahbani and Fuziah (2019) indicated that a survey had been conducted by global school-based student health in 2012 founds that "50.4 percent of teenagers admitted having sex for the first time as early as 14 years old".2) The figures on teenagers' pregnancy and engaging in sexual activity from an early age are worrying as these data grim figures are sobering.

As stated in Malaysian Law, "The age of consent in Malaysia is 16 where an individual is considered legally to be able to give consent to sexual activity and if the individual is aged 15 or below, they are not legally able to give consent and such activity may result in prosecution of statutory rape" (Salbiah, 2019). Also, it is against the law to have sexual contact with a girl under the age of 16, even if she agrees. According to Malaysia Penal Code, "Statutory rape stated in law section 375 (g): with or without her consent, when she is under sixteen years of age" (Nur Aina & Sayed Sikandar, 2017).

Today's adolescents will be our country's pillar of strength or backbone in the future. Unfortunately, the nation's major concerns are the decline in social awareness and moral values, as well as the staggering numbers of juveniles involved in crime, drug abuse, and other ills. Numerous studies on psychosocial issues have been conducted. However, few studies on psychosexual problems among Malaysian teenagers have been conducted.

Thus, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the factors that have triggered psychosexual behaviors among young teenagers from Asrama Bahagia Kuala Lumpur, one of the Correctional Institutions under the Social Welfare Department, Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development Malaysia.

1.1 Research Objective

To explore the factors that trigger psychosexual behavior among teenagers.

1.2 Research Question

How have teenagers triggered psychosexual behavior?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Peer pressure, mass media, cultural shock, trial and error attitude, promiscuity, poor family background, and poor environment factors can easily influence adolescents to participate in various forms of social illnesses. Personal, family, peers, school, and community, according to Zainab, Nourossadat, Masoumeh and Fazlollah (2017), have all contributed to high-risk sexual behavior among teenagers. According to Lim (2018), "peer influence has significantly contributed to teen pregnancies."

Boricic, Simic, and Eric (2015) proved in Serbia that there is a strong association between demographic characteristics and socioeconomic status and teenagers engaging in risky behavior. The findings were supported by a study conducted by Azyyati Nazim, Fariza Sham, and Salasiah Hanin Hamjah (2013), which suggested that adolescents at risk have dysfunctional families and lower socioeconomic status.

Aside from low family socioeconomic status, experiencing physical and/or sexual abuse by family members, and a lack of relationship between participants and their parents have all influenced respondents' involvement in delinquency (Norruzeyati Che Mohd Nasir, 2016), while the domain of social environmental factors is very important in understanding adolescents' involvement in substance abuse (Rozmi Ismail, Nor Azri Ahmad, Fauziah Ibrahim & Salina Nen, 2017).

Furthermore, various factors are closely associated with this grim figure of teen pregnancy such as lack of parental supervision, peers' influences, social media, backgrounds, etc United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF] reported that teenage pregnancies are strongly associated with poverty, poor parental supervision, low educational backgrounds, peer influences and media influences (Lum, 2018). In another statement by Dr. Aizura Syafinaz, the reasons behind high striking pregnancy cases in Malaysia involved girls from among the urban poor, that is lower socio-economic income group which comprising single mothers with children as well as parents who work double shifts or have 2 jobs and leave their children unsupervised at home (Salbiah, 2019).

Ainaa (2019), stated that most unplanned teenage pregnancies recorded in Malaysia are unmarried teens from lower socioeconomic groups. Discussing sex-related issues at home is still widely considered a subject of taboo and is not encouraged by parents and lack of sex information also contributes to this worrying phenomenon. The respondents from the study in Nigeria also revealed that most of the teenagers received sex education through their friends and they having limited knowledge from parents (Ogunbayode & Omozusi, 2016).

Dr. Aida Syafinaz (as cited in Salbiah, 2019), firmly believes that lack of parental supervision

as the parents fail to fill the gap in their child's life as parents by right the parents are primarily responsible for educating their child about sex information (Salbiah, 2019). According to Women, Family, and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, "watching pornography is also one of the [reasons for] underage pregnancy," as it increases their curiosity to perform sexual acts without considering the consequences (Joibi, 2018).

According to Healthy Families BC (2014), during the social development stage, peers have a significant impact on adolescents' sense of self and self-esteem. This is supported by Raising Children Network (2017), which states that peer influences and peer pressure can be either positive or negative because there is a chance for them to become more assertive, join new activities, or become more involved in school, but there is also a negative side where they may turn antisocial as this could be one of the most influential factors in shaping their long-term choices and behavior.

Finally, current technology has significantly altered how adolescents communicate with their peers and learn about their surroundings. Adolescents' ability to communicate and maintain social bonds has been altered by modern communication technologies. As a result, adolescents face stress and difficulty during the adolescent development period, and they may exhibit absent-minded behavior at times.

3. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the factors that lead to psychosexual behavior in teenagers. The study employed a qualitative case study design approach using purposive sampling method of seven females which consist of sexually active teenagers aged thirteen to eighteen, who were assigned to Asrama Bahagia Kuala Lumpur, one of the detention and rehabilitation for girls under *Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat* (JKM) Malaysia. Five of the participants are Malays, and two are Indians.

Semi-structured interviews have been conducted with all participants in the meeting room of the institution. The interviews were conducted in Bahasa Malaysia, and the information recorded was then transcribed. During the semi-structured interview, notes and reflection points were taken. As part of the triangulation process, an interview with a member of the institution's staff was conducted, as well as a focus group discussion with the participants. All of the interviews and discussions took place in Bahasa Malaysia. With the permission of the participants, all sessions were recorded, and the data were transcribed and thematically analyzed. Aside from that, one of the researchers observed the participants' daily routines and jotted down reflections and note points during the observation process.

Table 1: Summary of Participants' Demographic Profile

Participant	Age	Race	State	No Of Siblings	Birth Order	Reason Of Admission	Sexually Active
R1	16	Malay	Selangor	9	4	Social Case	15
R2	16	Indian	Selangor	8	5	Social Case	15
R3	17	Malay	Selangor	3	2	Social Case	13
R4	14	Malay	Selangor	3	1	Social Case	12
R5	18	Malay	Selangor	1	1	Social Case	15
R6	16	Indian	Selangor	3	3	Social Case	15
R7	16	Malay	Selangor	6	2	Social Case	14

4. ANALYSIS

The research question examines how the involvement of teenagers has triggered psychosexual behavior. The results revealed that peers, social media, and digital media are the three main factors that trigger psychosexual behavior among teenagers. Stated below are the participants' responses:

4.1 Peers Influence

Three participants of this study reported that the negative influence of their peers triggered their psychosexual behavior. Below are the participants' responses:

“At first, I intended to download some songs, but my friends asked me to search google and browse the porn sites.... I just saw it for fun... but after that, I saw it till the end” (R3,17)

“ah.... learn from my peer. Start with that friend. she shows a variety of things. So, starting from there, I tried to search for myself, for example in the Wechat application. Later on, she told me on many available websites” (R5, 18)

“ah.... First ah.... I learn the pornography from my boyfriend” (R6, 16)

As mentioned above, it clearly shows that peer influences play an important part in teenagers' lives as friendships provide them with connections of acceptance, intimacy, and trust. The researchers believe that during the period of adolescence, teenagers tend to rely more on groups of their peers compared to other groups, which from this they are being influenced positively or negatively later in their life.

4.2 Social Media

Social Media has played an important role in teenagers' development. Based on the other three participants of this study, social media influence triggered their psychosexual behavior. Below are the participants' responses:

"I learn from YouTube, the pornography videos..." (R1,16)

"Ah....me... I used my phone to watch the videos, through YouTubes, Instagram and watching English movies" (R2,16)

"I looked through videos, at... ah... Instagram, Facebook" (R4,14)

The world is currently drowning with information readily available over social media is a vital part of teenagers' lives and this inadvertently exposes them to toxic content and activity. In this technology-based world, teenagers are highly exposed to potential harm imposed by social media and gadgets as they tend to spend hours surfing the net while failing to distinguish between moral and immoral behaviors. The researcher believes that the amount of knowledge we received through social media, or the internet may mislead teenagers as it is vulnerable due to their age.

4.3 Digital Media

One participant of this study revealed that digital influence triggered psychosexual behavior. The participant's response is as below:

"I learn from, hmmm... CDs. I found the CDs at home. Ya.. ya.. at my home... my own house. My father's CD" (R7, 16).

Apart, the participants watched pornography films and videos through digital media. As teenagers, they tend to put a high level of curiosity and be influenced by the people they are close to. If these feelings of curiosity are repeated, they will prone to be addicted and hooked on the pornography contents. This habit leads teenagers to be involved in psychosexual activities.

5. DISCUSSION

The participants claimed that peers, social media, and digital media were the factors that triggered their psychosexual behavior. For instance, some of the participants responded as follows:

5.1 Peer Influence

Peer influence, according to the participants, is one of the factors that lead to their involvement in psychosexual activities. Peer groups play an important role during adolescence because they can have such a profound influence on a teenager's life. The findings have aligned with Sijtsema, & Lindenberg, (2018) about the peer influence effects for different forms of behavior including externalizing behavior.

During this time, adolescents begin to form more intimate bonds with their peer groups and

begin to experiment with things around them, such as developing new interests, hobbies, or preferences. According to Rekha Kumarasuriar, a lecturer in the UTAR Faculty of Creative Industries, "many research findings show that peers have a strong influence in forming adolescent/teen beliefs and influencing their behavior during the teenage years" (Hariati, 2010).

A negative peer influence can cause an individual to develop bad habits such as drug abuse, alcohol abuse, free sex, shoplifting, risky behaviors, teenage pregnancy, and even involvement in criminal activity. According to Rekha Kumarasuriar (2010), "when asked about their reasons for having sex, only 6.7% stated they did it because their friends were doing it, 29% stated they were curious, 28% stated they wanted to have fun, 18% stated they were in love with their lovers, and 15% stated their respective partners pressured them into sex" (Hariati, 2010). According to the findings of the participant interviews, negative peer influence caused them to easily adopt dangerous habits without giving long-term consequences, including risky behaviors.

Laurence Steinberg, a researcher at Temple University in Philadelphia, discovered that "during early adolescence in particular, teenagers are drawn to the immediate rewards of a potential choice and are less attentive to the possible risks; also, teenagers, in general, are still learning to control their impulses, think ahead, and resist pressure from others" (Head Up Teacher,2008). Another study, conducted by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, discovered that "teens may find it more difficult to control impulsive or risky behaviors when their friends are present or in emotionally charged situations" (Head Up Teacher,2008).

As previously discussed, peer influence on the adolescent self and social relationships circle has been demonstrated. As a result, parents must get to know their children's friends and establish positive relationships with them. The researcher believes that parents must establish common ground rules that include clear boundaries such as what activities are permitted and prohibited in the teenagers' social circle; open communication between teenagers and parents is also essential at this stage of life.

5.2 Social Media

Social media plays a vital role in teenagers' lives as it enables them to broaden their social connections, make new friends, meet new people, talk to friends, be creative, learn new information, or even use this platform to share their lives updates on social media through status, pictures, and videos. However, the negative impact of social media use among teenagers on sexuality and social wellness cannot be overstated. Studies have indicated that the Contributions of mainstream sexual social media exposure have a vital impact on sexual attitudes (Coyne et al., 2019).

A study conducted by an American researcher finds that there is "a direct relationship between the amount of sexual content children see and their level of sexual activity or their intentions to

have sex in the future” (Jones,2006). A survey published in the Journal of Adolescent Health and online stated that "film, television, music, and magazines may act as a kind of sexual super peer for teenagers seeking information about sex," according to Jones (2006). According to the survey, "the strong relationship between media and adolescent sexual expression may be attributed to the media's role as an important source of sexual socialization for teenagers." According to Marijke Naezer, an anthropologist and gender studies researcher, social media is currently used by young people to explore their sexuality through sexting, sexy selfies, online dating, and pornography (Radboud University, 2018). As a result, social media influence should not be underestimated, as teenagers are particularly vulnerable due to their age.

The researcher suggests that parents teach their teenagers about social network protocols and acceptable behavior while browsing social networks. According to Chakravarty (2019), parents should discuss the benefits and drawbacks of using social media in a family setting. The researcher also suggests that parents keep laptops or computers in an open space rather than allowing their children to keep them in a room, as this allows parents to monitor their children's browsing history. It is critical to establish clear boundaries, rules, and guidelines, as well as the amount of time allocated to the adolescent to browse the internet, as these steps may assist parents in preventing any suspicious behavior.

5.3 Digital Media

Negative messages on social media or other forms of media can have an indirect impact on a teenager's mindset. Because they are vulnerable due to their age, adolescents tend to accept everything they see and hear in the media as "normal acceptable behavior." Research shows that

puberty may contribute to adolescent neural reorganization and maturational advancement, and sex differences also emerge in puberty (Goddings, Beltz, Peper, Crone & Braams, 2019). According to Newport Academy (2018), the "prefrontal cortex [which controls reasoning, emotions, and self-regulations] is not fully developed for adolescents." According to Raising Children Network (2017), "the parts of the teenage brain that handle planning and impulse control do not completely mature until around the age of 25 years old, and this is likely to result in adolescents making quick decisions without always thinking through the consequences." Furthermore, adolescents are more likely to seek out new experiences and engage in risky behavior. As a result, adolescents face stress and difficulty during the adolescent development period, and they may exhibit absent-minded behavior at times.

Adolescents spend far too many hours/times on their devices, according to experts. The co-occurring trends of increased social media use and changes in risky behaviors among adolescents over the past decade may be related to each other, as the behavioral manifestation of adolescent risk-taking and sensation seeking has been shown to change in relation to broader social and cultural factors throughout history (Vannucci, Simpson, Gagnon, & Ohannessian, 2020). A study published in the Journal of Adolescent Health and available online found that

"films, TV programs, music, and magazines usually portrayed sex as risk-free and sex was usually between unmarried couples, and examples of using condoms or other contraception were extremely rare" (Jones,2006). Jones (2006) claims that the study highlights that "Adolescence is a developmental stage marked by intense information seeking, particularly about adult roles, and, given the scarcity of information about sexuality readily available to teens, adolescents may turn to the media for information about sexual norms" (Jones,2006). As a result, teenagers who spend far too much time on social media, digital media, or any other media platforms should be concerned, as they tend to blindly follow what they hear or watch on those platforms.

Therefore, the findings of this study indicate that digital media is one of the factors that triggered psychosexual behavior in teenagers. The researcher believes that parents should set a good example by limiting their children's access to social media, digital media, and other forms of media at home and spending quality time with them; this includes participating as a family in sports, music, or even volunteering on weekends to help their children develop healthier lifestyles.

The limitation of this study is that the samples were only collected from female participants. Apart from that, with only two Indian participants, the ethnic difference of participants may be limited. At the same time, because the study was limited to correctional institutions in Kuala Lumpur, the findings may not apply to all residents of Malaysian correctional institutions. To balance the numbers of participants, future research may need to include more participants of different races from Malaysia's few correctional institutions, such as Taman Seri Puteri Kuching and Tunas Bakti School Sungai Besi, so that the researchers can study whether this has a significant effect on the findings.

6. CONCLUSION

Participants in this study believed that, in addition to peer and social media influences, digital media was the most important factor in triggering psychosexual behavior in teenagers. The findings suggest that parents should set a good example by monitoring their children's use of social and digital media. It is suggested that parents spend quality time with their children participating in sports, music, or volunteer work to help their children develop a healthier lifestyle. Because the number of participants chosen for this study is relatively small and limited to a single gender and ethnic difference, it is recommended that future studies include more participants of different races to balance the numbers for significant effects on the findings.

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