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Sexual Attitudes and Behaviour of Middle-Class Young People in Jakarta

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A thesis submitted for the degree of
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Declaration

Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work undertaken as a scholar in the Demography Program, Division of Demography and Sociology, Research School of Social Sciences, The Australian National University.

[Signature]

Iwu Dwisetyani Utomo

Canberra
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For my parents and Ririn, Karina and Nugroho
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_It is He Who is God_
_In heaven and God on earth;_
_And He is Full_
_of Wisdom and knowledge._

_And blessed is He_
_To Whom belongs the dominion_
_Of the heavens and the earth,_
_And all between them:_
_With Him is the knowledge_
_Of the Hour (of Judgement):_
_And to Him shall ye_
_Be brought back._
_(Ayat 84-85, surat Az-zukhruf/God Adornments)_
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Abstract

Indonesian single young people (15-24 years old) are experiencing extremely rapid and bewildering change in values, attitudes and behaviour towards the opposite sex. Premarital sex, pregnancy and abortion, and STDs are increasing among young people in urban and rural areas. Young people are becoming more liberal in various public expressions of sexual feelings. Age at marriage and educational attainment are increasing. Parents and society increasingly expect young people to have higher education and professional careers although marriage is still a universal goal.

Among Jakarta urban middle-class young people, lifestyles have become more Westernised than in previous generations. Young people ape the American youth culture as it is portrayed in the media, which is characterised by materialism, consumerism and recreational sex. Part of this is due to extensive exposure to information on sex and pornographic materials, ‘Western’ values and ‘Western’ products. Paradoxically, however, religious awareness among young people seems to be increasing, and more girls are wearing veils.

The rapid socio-economic changes in Indonesia have provided two strong and conflicting forces, Westernisation and tradition. Westernisation through massive globalisation of information and traditional values through family, religious teaching and other social institutions. The synthesis of these two strong forces is a set of values and attitudes that is uniquely Indonesian as young people have only adopted those values that do not endanger the idealised morality. This can be explained by the framework of idealised morality, the state, modernisation and mixing between the sexes that has been developed for this thesis.

The justification for this thesis is that the government still does not see young people as sexual beings who need information and services related to reproductive health. The government still treats sex as a private matter and not as a public-health concern. Consequently, sexuality remains marginal in the health and education agendas. Access to contraception and reproductive health services is highly restricted for single people. Sex education is not given at school and parents are reluctant to talk about sex to their children. Despite the sexual pressures that middle-class Jakarta young people are experiencing, their lack of knowledge on sexual and reproductive health issues puts them at risk of STDs including AIDS, premarital pregnancy and abortion, early marriage, and maternal and child health related problems. Other effects may be the loss of economic and educational opportunities through premarital pregnancy and early marriage.

This thesis examines sexual values, attitudes, and behaviour among urban middle-class single young people (15-24 years old) and married couples (30 years and older [older generation]). The issues covered include what is regarded as proper premarital sexual behaviour as well as concepts of marriage. Information related to sex education and family planning knowledge was also collected. Data used in this thesis are derived from the 1994/1995 Jakarta Marriage Values and Sexuality Survey which I conducted over a period of nine months. The survey covers 344 high school students, 175 university students and 120 married couples. Besides the survey, qualitative data were also obtained. Methods included in the qualitative approach are focus-group discussions and in-depth interviews. Ninety three in-depth interviews were conducted, not just among target groups but with experts and policy makers; 12 focus-group discussions were conducted among male and female young people living with parents or in boarding houses.

The conceptual framework of idealised morality, the state, modernisation and mixing between the sexes is operationalised as follows: interview data from the 1994/1995 Jakarta survey were developed into factor scales within three broad liberal-conservative dimensions of religiosity, media and Western exposure, and marriage values. Then using bivariate analysis the scales were validated by examining whether they displayed the expected relationships with respondents’ characteristics, sexual behaviour and attitudes to sexual behaviour. In the final stage multivariate analysis was used to examine the extent to which sexual behaviour and attitudes are related to the scales considered to be valid. The sexual attitudes and behaviour in
this case were developed into the following indices: *attitudinal sexual index when a couple is dating, attitudinal sexual index when a couple is already engaged* and *sexual behaviour index*.

This study supports the hypothesis that the more committed a heterosexual relationship is towards marriage, the more intensive is the level of premarital sexual involvement. Attitudes toward premarital sex also appear to become more liberal as a relationship moves closer toward marriage, from dating to being engaged. In terms of permissiveness towards premarital sexual values and behaviour, it seems that young adults (20-24 years old) are more permissive than adolescents (15-19 years old), and males, non-Moslems and young people living in boarding houses are more permissive than females, Muslim and young people living at home.

Factor analysis was successfully used to identify factors underlying the three broad dimensions of *religiosity, exposure to media and Western culture* and *marriage values*. Bivariate analysis of the 15 factors and the three sexuality indices indicate that almost the same pattern emerges as in the previous analysis. Both religious factors (*Obligation to religious performance* and *Voluntary religious performance*) emerge as prominent predictors of the three sexuality indices. The religiosity dimension is an important determinant of sexual behaviour and attitudes. In the exposure to media and Western culture dimension, *Exposure to Western music and movies, Exposure to health and science programs on television and Exposure to radio programs, news and popular science reports* which reflect engagement with the modern world, were strong forecasters of the sexuality indices, while *Exposure to Western influences* is again prominently related to the respondent’s own sexual behaviour. Thus, it can be argued that liberal sexual behaviour and attitudes are related to exposure to Western music, movies, and other influences as well as to engagement with the modern world. *Power-authority in marriage* consistently emerges as the only strong marriage values factor related to all three sexuality behaviour indices. This makes it clear that those with more liberal sexual behaviour and attitudes are less likely to see the husband in a position of power over the wife and are more likely to believe in greater equality between the husband and wife.

As for sources and usefulness of information on sexuality, middle-class young people in Jakarta depend more on media, school and peers than on family members, and find media and school to be the most useful sources. The most important finding regarding information on sexuality is that *respondents’ level of knowledge on sexuality is associated with their sexual attitudes and behaviour*. Respondents who have a higher level of knowledge on sexuality are less likely to have liberal sexual attitudes or to be involved in sexual activities. This is a strong argument for giving sex education to young people in Indonesia.

In comparing attitudes and behaviour towards premarital sex across the two generations, it seems that changes in attitudes to premarital sex occur cross-sectionally, meaning that the attitudes of both generations change at the same time. In contrast, however, patterns of sexual behaviour do not appear to have changed dramatically over time. Males of the older generation continue to have both a public and a private persona, thus being more hypocritical about their sexual behaviour than younger males. Males of the older generation express relatively conservative attitudes compared to males of the younger generation, but their behaviour when young was similar to that of the younger generation. This is very different from females of both generations, who demonstrate similar attitudes and behaviour regarding premarital sex. In sum, with the exception of the relatively conservative public persona of males from the older generation, the attitude gap between young people and the older generation appears to be small.