

# **Journey of adolescent sexual curiosity as a signal of needs on sexuality education in Makassar<sup>1</sup>**

**Sartiah Yusran<sup>2</sup>**

## **Introduction**

Today young people represent the largest segment of the population in the world, with over one billion between the ages of 10-19 or one out of six persons (UNFPA 2000, AIDS Epidemic Update 2001). Most of them are living in the developing world (MEASURE 2000). Increasing in today's world, adolescence has been recognized as a period of danger and a period of experimentation (Bassett and Kaim 2000), a time both of opportunity and change, and heightened vulnerabilities (WHO 1997). Conventionally, adolescence is represented as a period of dynamic transition, from childhood to adulthood, although is experienced differently in every society, sexuality only one component of their transition period. As a result, adolescent reproductive health is an increasingly important component of global health and programs that can provide information, ensure access to services, and develop life skills are crucial to the future of this population (WHO, UNFPA et al. 1999).

Delayed marriage is one reason for increasing prevalence of premarital sexual relationships, dating and more serious partnerships (Bassett and Kaim 2000). The influences of media such as the development of information, communication technologies, economic and social transition are also reasons for adolescent premarital relationships. Adolescent sexual and reproductive behavior is influenced by these factors including inadequate access to accurate information, pressure and erosion of the role of the family, gender power imbalances and economic constraints (Hasmi 2002; Utomo 2002; Situmorang 2003). Furthermore, adolescents do not receive sexual information from formal agents such as parents or schools, and they lack access to reproductive health services (Utomo 2003). As a result, young people

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<sup>2</sup> She is a Ph.D candidate in the Key Centre for Women's Health in Society, The University of Melbourne, Australia.



remain under-informed about sexual matters. Although efforts have been made in health education, some adolescents do not see themselves as vulnerable and they still put themselves at high risk. This phenomenon occurs everywhere, including in some countries where religious and cultural norms would make this difficult, including Indonesia, where premarital sexual activity is culturally taboo; and using contraception is forbidden to unmarried young people (Bongaarts and Cohen 1998; Bassett and Kaim 2000; Bennett 2000c).

Justification of this paper has influenced by the on-going debate in Indonesia regarding national policies and programs about adolescent reproductive health program in formal education. The needs for a national program has been recognized (Hasmi 2001), however, due to the political sensitivity of these issues, the implementation of school-based policy and programs have not been implemented yet (Hasmi 2001; Hasmi 2002; Situmorang 2003; Utomo 2003). At the same time, worldwide, there is a consensus on the 'critical importance' of improving the well-being of adolescents, and recognition that school-based is a strategic place to provide sexual health and reproduction information for most adolescents. This approach could help young people's problems<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, the main theme of this paper is a journey of adolescent sexual curiosity as the signal of their needs on school-based sexuality education. My argument is presented in three sections. First, I discuss attitudes and beliefs about adolescent sexual behavior and premarital sex. Secondly, existing secondary school curriculum does not support the current needs of adolescent about the sexuality information. Finally, I present policy implication of the current adolescent's situation. Then, I conclude this paper with an argument about a possibility of comprehensive sexuality education for formal education according to their needs.

## **Methodology**

Researching sexuality is often politicized, socially 'prohibited' and continually debated (Herzberger 1993; Gourlay 1996; Green 1998; Harrison 2000; Utomo 2002). Studying sexuality is quite difficult in Indonesia due to the cultural and religious sensitivity to the topic, and because of the political setting, government policies, the research environment, and difficulties in conducting school-based research (Utomo 1998). This draws attention to and

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<sup>3</sup> (Massey 1988; Haffner 1990; Cohen and Wilsom 1994; Gourlay 1996; Kirby 1994; Jacobs and Wolf 1995; Kirby 1995a; Birdthistle and Vince-Whitman 1997; Bongaarts and Cohen 1998; Donovan 1998; Hughes 1998; Ridini 1998; Campbell and Aggleton 1999; Canada 1999; Bassett and Kaim 2000; Finger 2000; Harrison 2000).



reflects in the complexity of Indonesian cultural values, ethnic groups and the diversity of religions. Different expressions of sexual behavior are culturally specific and vary according to the religious and social values. What is regarded as normal in one society might not be normal in another group (Utomo 2000; Situmorang 2003). These are challenges for developing a comprehensive sexuality education programs in Indonesia.

The research aimed to explore views on and concepts of adolescent sexual behavior in Makassar, South Sulawesi and to identify the needs of adolescents for sexuality education. To understand more about young people's, parents', teachers' and the broader community's attitudes to and expectations of a school-based programs and to identify the gaps between young people's needs and existing school programs. Therefore, a qualitative methodology was identified as most appropriate to explore the range of views and experiences of four target groups of this study (young people, parents, teachers and key informants from different background) on source of sexual information (Akim 2005). The empirical data supporting this study was conducted through community meeting, in-depth interviews, focus group discussion and key informants who were from several cities (Makassar, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, Jakarta and Denpasar) within 12 months. Data was also supplemented by workshops in Makassar among secondary schools' students, teachers and parents after conducting in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

Conceptually, I was interested in the variety of people who directly and indirectly play a key role in adolescent concerns as mentioned. I also intended to maximize my opportunities to hear from these groups in order to obtain the required data. Therefore, recruitment of participants of this study applied two different approaches; top-down and bottom-up approach as the participants represented from policy makers, implementer, and receivers of sexuality education program. For more detail the following table is my study participants.

**Table 3.1 Study Participants**

No	Participants	Methods	Male	female	No of part.
1	Key Informants	In-depth Interviews	9	6	15
2	Parents	In-depth Interviews	5	10	15
		FGDs: 2 groups (7 per group)	6	8	14
3	Students	In-depth Interviews	10	10	20



		FGD: 9 groups (8 per group)	36	36	72
4	Teachers	In-depth interview FGD: 2 groups (6 per group)	11 5	8 7	19 12
			<b>82</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>167</b>

However, I have chosen public senior high schools only as the location of this study, although broad and sample location may represent the type of public senior high schools, but still non-representative where the school samples were urban schools in city of Makassar.

Permission to conduct this study in Makassar was first sought from the Department of National Education at the provincial level (South Sulawesi) with an ethics approval from the University of Melbourne where I am doing my Ph.D program. A letter was obtained from the Department of Education of the metropolitan district (*Dinas Pendidikan Kodya*) Makassar, which described my study objectives and fieldwork sites in public secondary schools (*Sekolah Menengah Umum*). Having that letter made it easier for me to approach public schools through the school principals.

A community meeting was an initial formal data collection method for my study, with the idea that before directly involving the participants, there was an advantage in knowing other people's perceptions and shared opinions. Another important purpose of this meeting was to introduce my study and seek help from the participants in order to ensure that I was on the right track. The community meeting was conducted and facilitated by my home university collaborated with the Department of National Education at the district level. Establishing a good relationship with meeting participants allowed me to explore this sensitive topic in a very flexible way. I took notes to cover potentially relevant and important issues and responses during the meeting. From the meeting, I noticed a clear distinction between proponents and opponents of the research topic. One of the participants offered criticisms, saying that:

This topic should be introduced from home because it is very sensitive and still taboo in our society according to Islamic belief. I think it is also difficult for us to explain to our children. Once this topic's introduced, it should be based on a religious perspective; if not, it is better not to put this subject into formal education. Apart from this, we need to use culturally sensitive words instead of using sex,



sexuality and other sensitive terms, because these are *konsep barat* (western concepts), that is the problem.<sup>4</sup>

Ironically, a representative from the Department of Religion, as a proponent of school-based program, argued and replied that:

We know that this is taboo as people always say, but in reality, in our society, some communities do not obey to our religious beliefs anymore, as they have practiced premarital sex, not only young people, but married men also *selingkuh* (having affairs) with other married women or with *gadis remaja* (female teenagers). As a consequence, we have heard or we have even found young women having abortions illegally, and experiencing unintended pregnancies under our eyes. Therefore, we need sex education for our children, and of course religious education should be strengthened too. Sex education or what ever we call it should be designed with parents' agreement, in terms of topics.<sup>5</sup>

These basic examples of proponents' and opponents' arguments arose in the meeting. Some advantages occurred through the meeting. I recruited key informant representatives including community leaders, religious leaders, researchers and representatives from non-government organizations who had been working on a reproductive health program. This initial data collection had considerable influence on other data collection techniques as mentioned.

All primary data were tape-recorded, transcribed and translated into English. Data analysis involved coding the textual data by themes raised by participants and entering the coded data into Altas-ti software package. To analyze data, therefore, I used triangulation as the appropriate way to capture and to render the various data which had been transcribed to be a comprehensive collection. This comprehensive approach was used to capture concepts and beliefs from all respondents regarding adolescents sexual behaviour and provided more holistic understanding of adolescents' needs and problems regarding their sexuality related issues. Verbatin quotation from respondents are used to illustrated key issues or patterns of behaviour. However, this paper presents some findings related to sexual curiosity among secondary school and also related to their need about sexuality education.

### **Adolescent change and sexual curiosity**

Adolescence is a time of change (Voydanoff and Donnelly 1990), a transition from childhood to adulthood or maturity. Erikson (1963;1982 in Shaffer 1999:45) claimed that in this transitional stage adolescent forms the question "Who am I" to find out his or her

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<sup>4</sup> Literal translation of the statement in Indonesian from a school supervisor.

<sup>5</sup> Literal translation of the Indonesian of a statement from a representatives of the Department of Religion.



identity. Erikson's "psychological stage" is constructed as a combination of both biological maturation and social demands from "crisis and conflict" faced by adolescents (Shaffer 1999: 45-46). Moore (1993: 15) characterizes this period as one of "storm and stress" associated with conflict and confusion regarding adolescents' roles (Moore and Rosenthal 1993). The successful resolution of this stage for Erickson is developing a "sense of identity" of adolescence.

The most challenging task of adolescence is to build a commitment to present and future roles, and to develop an ideology about and values regarding future relationships in order to move through this stage satisfactorily. Erickson claims that an important aspect of identity formation is learning how, to what Moore (1993) has termed "to be comfortable with one's body and sexuality" (Moore and Rosenthal 1993). Several authors including Erickson (1963;1982 in Shaffer 1999; Voydanoff, 1990; Moore 1993) argue that the level of conflict and stress experienced by adolescents is influenced by social change and cultural norms. These influential contextual factors place adolescents in very difficult positions to identify their roles and to move through this stage with an inner confidence about who they are and where they are going (Voydanoff and Donnelly 1990; Moore and Rosenthal 1993; Shaffer 1999). At the same time, young people are called on to control their own behavior and to be responsible for the consequences of their action. This shift creates questions, concerns and curiosities toward openness and acceptance of concepts and beliefs about sexuality. Formal education is one way to help them work through conflict and confusion regarding their identity (Voydanoff and Donnelly 1990; Moore and Rosenthal 1993; Shaffer 1999).

In the past, in Indonesian patriarchal society, adolescence was very short and simple, especially for girls. Even today, this is still true in some places especially in rural areas. The most important thing was to be a good girl and protect one's virginity (Utomo 2003). Therefore, it was very significant if adolescence period most of the girls were short as noted above, and the main aim of adolescent girls was to identify a future husband or have one chosen for her and become wives and mothers. However, this traditional system has changed rapidly especially with urbanization, and with increased interaction between the sexes due to several reasons.



Firstly, since the New Order, another relevant change among adolescents was the expansion of primary school education as 'nine year basic education' and the regulation of new employment opportunities for women (Jones 1994 in Robinson 2000: 147). Indonesian adolescents including Makassar have greater opportunities compared to the last decade to live independently away from home, to obtain higher education, and work outside their home town (Utomo 1998). As a result, adolescents remain single longer and have more freedom to choose their partners and delay marriage than their predecessors (Hartono 1998). At the same time, adolescent girls have increased authority to decide their future career, have greater opportunities to get good jobs and make friends with the opposite sex, although the desire to marry is still universal. The 1998/1999 Baseline Survey indicated that 99.9% respondents still plan to marry (1998/1999 Baseline Survey Executive Summary). In addition, although adolescents have the freedom to interact with the opposite sex, to choose their mates or remain single, they still aspire to maintain family values in many premarital relationships.

Secondly, modern Indonesian adolescence begins earlier and end late than it did for previous generation (Hanartini and Nurhasanah 1997; Hasmi 2001; Utomo 2003). Indonesian adolescent girls, specifically, are encouraged to regulate their behavior at a younger age than in the past (Utomo 2003). Even though there is no data from a generation ago, most agree that puberty used to begin at age 14-15. Age at menarche has lowered, from 11-12 years old and as young as 9 years due to better nutrition and social and economic changes (Pangkahila 1997a; Bennett 2000c; Situmorang 2003; Utomo 2003). This phenomenon has been reported worldwide (WHO, UNFPA et al. 1997; WHO/UNFPA/UNICEF 1998; Gerald 1999).

Furthermore, migration from rural areas to Makassar city is high due to better education facilities in the city (Makassar 2002). Some parents, therefore, allow their children to obtain higher education in the city, beginning at the secondary school level. As a result, some young people grow up away from home and are less- controlled by their parents. They also have more freedom to socialize prior to marriage. I found that in the economic crisis at the end of 1997 and early 1998, some cases that economically affected rural families still supported their children to have an education by selling their property or cattle or borrowing from a bank. Poor families who did not have anything to sell, they made arrangements with friends or relatives by sending their children for further studies while living with other families in



Makassar. The arrangement included living/boarding and food, and also commitment to help the owner of the house with housework or domestic work. As a result, many students stayed to their families to obtain their education and those families were responsible for their school fees. While with those families, students undertook housework before and after school including on the weekend. Students also economized by staying in rental houses for four or five students, boys and girls, with both high school and university students. Students who stay in boarding houses share with other friends a single bedroom.

These above reasons create a new phenomenon in terms of social influence and social life for adolescents. Not only for those who are away from home and have less parental control (Utomo 2001), but also adolescents who live with their parents. They have freedom to socialize with anyone in their surroundings. During this period, they may develop an interest in and attraction to the opposite sex, *pacaran* (courtships) may also develop. Several relationships may commence during their school time before they have sufficient information about their sexuality related problems.

### **Why to have a pacar (boyfriend or girlfriend)**

Several participants of this study stayed in a rented house and shared a room with her sister and her brother, both university students or with other friends. In an in-depth interview, the student, Ani,<sup>6</sup> told the story of a friend who had lived with her boy friend, a university student, in a rented house. They had sex and the girl fell pregnant:

I had a friend, who stayed with her boy friend and she got pregnant. Initially, she stayed in a boarding house with some other girls, but when they started *pacaran* they moved in to a rented house on their own. They both come from the same *kampung* (village)...I knew her as we were very close to each other. I also stayed in a rental house with my sister and my brother near her. A few months later, she came to me and told her experience. I was very frightened (she probably was worried) to listen to her story because she was afraid of her parents. She asked me where to go to terminate her pregnancy and I said "I do not know"...you better go to the doctor, but she was *malu* (shy). She could not believe herself getting pregnant because she admitted that having sex with her boy friend was just *iseng* (for fun) and she wanted to make her boyfriend happy. In fact she was confused about what to do (Ani, aged 18).

Several respondents mentioned that premarital sex was for experimentation and that they did not think through the potential consequences. Adolescents in their daily interactions are

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<sup>6</sup> Buginese, Moslem, the third and the youngest child in her family, Ani staying in a rented house with her brother and her sister. Her father is a retired public officer and her mother is a nurse. They are from Palopo, Northern South Sulawesi, more than 300 km from Makassar.





attracted to the opposite sex and tease each other. They become curious about their relationships as mentioned. Consequently, *pacaran* (having a boy or girlfriend) is common among adolescents, including secondary school students, but most of them claimed that it was for *iseng* (fun) only.

### ***Iseng (just for fun) or reputation?***

More than half of the student respondents said that having a boyfriend or a girlfriend for the first time was ‘just want to know each other’. Several extracts were from girls participants in focus group discussions<sup>7</sup> indicated that most *remaja* (adolescents) who have *pacar* (partner) for the first time, they wanted to *coba-coba* (try), *main-main* (just playing) and were curious in having sexual experiences. They wanted to deal with *pacaran* as other adolescents and some adolescents had relationships with *tidak sopan* (not polite) such as kissing each other in public. This group also claimed that most boys did anything they wanted to do with their *pacar* including *yang satu itu* (that one refers to sexual intercourse). This is true because most *remaja putra* (boys) also claimed that “having *pacar* is ‘just for fun’.

At the same time, two important issues could be noted from girls’ perspectives; this indicated teenage girls had recognized their right to speak out where never happen before according to some literature. However, they still maintained their reputation as a “good girl” and some girls reported that *pacaran*, they need to be selective. In Bugis, Idrus (2003:48) has termed *male bi’* and this term not only related to sexual relationship, but all related to feminine behavior. For the girls who *male bi’* they were just smile. This can be related to the girls in the group discussion above as they were inconsistency talking about sexual preference during *pacaran*. There is no clear understanding about *pacaran* concept among adolescents, what does relationship look like and what kinds of things that they could do or not to do.

Most adolescents claimed that *pacaran* did not mean that they would marry each other at the time where they are in secondary school age. Although a few of them had conservative opinion and critically mentioned that *pacar* means *calon suami* (future husband). A girl who wore *jilbab* had warned her peers and said that having a *pacar*, “we need to consider our

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<sup>7</sup> Focus Group Discussion conducted in three different groups; girls’ group, boys’ group and mixed girls and boys’ groups.



parents choice” (Eva, 16 years old). This opinion was over-determined by Bugis traditional culture, to what Pelras (1996:152-154) has found that marriage in Bugis was closed related to kinship principle. Like other society, kinship principle was the major aspects of people social life including “marriage, social hierarchy, power and personal influence”. In line with the kinship principle, to marry in Bugis means *siala* (to take each other), not only for couple, but two kinships become one grandparents and parents play a key role to find *calon istri* (future wife) or to decide *calon suami* (future husband) for their grandchildren or their children. I believe that this tradition is still exist in some Bugis families, in the case of Eva who wanted their parents choosing her future husband or even her *pacar*.

Generally, adolescents in this study do not understand the idea about how to have a good relationship, probably some of them know, but “they just do not care” (Haerani, 17 years old). Sexual desire is more dominant than their understanding of having a healthy relationship or maintaining culture and religion as a way of life. Focus group discussion discussed a case study<sup>8</sup> and this indicated that most students lack of understanding for the long-term consequences of having premarital sex. They mostly acknowledged that the alternative solution was arranged their marriage, because they recognized that having unwanted pregnancy indicates as *siri’ keluarga* (family stigma) and according to one of the key informants, some unwanted married ended up with unhappy family such as domestic violence which ended up with divorced. Apart from this, most students did not realize the burden of parents for having unwanted pregnant girl that could be a reason being exclusive from social events. Social reputation is essential as a basic structure of Bugis society (Pelras 1996:150-152). Particularly, for those who have high social status in the communities such as *pejabat* (top leader in the government official), *ulama* (religious leader) or *tokoh masyarakat* or *tokoh adat* (community leaders). Pelras also claimed that although Bugis had tremendously changes from “traditionality to modernity,” they still maintained their specific cultural values, although some had disappeared. This is because the Bugis society always refers to the doctrine of “*to-riolo* (the people of yesterday) and *ade’ pura onro* (precedents)”. This means that although Bugis culture had been westernized to be a modern Bugis culture; the concept of *siri’* still exists in conservative Bugis society (Idrus 2003: 47)

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8 A case study in Focus Group Discussion was about teenage girl who got pregnant from her boy friend and their parents arranged their married.



as an example. In this case, having unwanted pregnant girl in the family indicates as *siri keluarga* (family stigma).

This study found that in a modern Bugis society, like today, young generation received incomplete message about tradition that inherited from the past. As a result, they adopted the tradition differently and almost nothing to refers to norms and patterns of behavior related to a specifically Bugis identity, particularly for those who in Makassar city.

### **Peer pressure**

Herbert (1995) conducted a research in Nebraska and found that the peer group is ‘a source of affection, sympathy and understanding “a place for experimentation” and supportive setting for reaching the two primary developmental tasks of adolescence. Young people are curious to find their identity and wish to be separate and independent from parents to find their autonomy. Therefore, peers play a large part in a young people’s life and typically ‘replace family as the center of young people’s social and leisure activities’ (Herbert 1995).

Peer relationships were discussed in both in-depth interviews and focus group discussions in this study. Makassar adolescents were very relaxed in discussing their relationships with other friends. Interactions between boys and girls are also common today among secondary school students. Girls admitted that having a boy friend is important because they want to get to know each other as mentioned. Some girls and boys also admitted beside having fun, *pacar* also is a good friend to share, to study together and also a friend for *jalan-jalan* (walking together). On the other hand, a small number of respondents mentioned that they did not want to have boy friends as they were still in secondary school, and they needed to concentrate on their studies.

The following dialogue from a focus group discussion illustrates that adolescents discussed their formative experiences of opposite sex attraction, which usually occurs before *pacaran* (premarital relationship). The dynamic of the group discussion was very interactive, especially when the discussion topic was about *pacaran*. From this, it was found that adolescents interact prior to their relationship by teasing each other. Teasing occurs in their daily expression from young males to females and also from females to males.

*Do you think boys and girls of your age want to have pacar?*



Yes, of course, everybody wants to have a *pacar* (boyfriend or girlfriend), don't you think? (He turned to his friends for agreement). I think almost all *remaja* (adolescents) in our age have *pacar*, even those younger than us. But we (students) need to be careful when attracting a girl to be a *pacar*, because some girls are materialistic, they want to have a boy friend who has a car, who is handsome and everything.... So some *cewek* (single woman or girl) are actually dangerous, when they know a boy or a man who has money, they go for it....and some *cewek* are also very aggressive (Atmajaya, aged 17).

I do not think so...in my opinion, *cowok* (boy or unmarried man) is more dangerous than *cewek* (a girl or unmarried woman). When a *cowok* has a *pacar*, they want *macam-macam* (many things) from us. This is even more dangerous because at the end, they mostly want to have sex. When his *cewek* refused him, the boy will tease the girl as *konu* (old fashion), *ketinggalan zaman* (out of date or old fashion) and they tell to his friend that "this girl is a hick really". That is not really acceptable, is it? (Ida, aged 17).

But you (girls) are also afraid of losing your *cowok*, aren't you? In fact, you are *malu-malu tapi mau* (pretending to be shy) in accepting what a *cowok* wants from you, but wow, in fact you are *mana tahan* (cannot restrain yourself) (Hari, aged 19).

But you (she pointed boys) sometimes are *cemburu buta* (jealous without any reason), when you see your *pacar* joking around with another boy. (Haya, aged 17).

No way, a girl is even more jealous when she sees her boyfriend talking to other girls. Do you know why? Because she is afraid of losing her boyfriend. Sorry....jealousy is not boys' habit. (Adnan, aged 18).

These extracts illustrate that school adolescents tease each other in a very aggressive way and this may become an entry point to move to *pacaran*. Such interaction could be an indication of adolescent sexual feeling. Although lack of literature in Makassar describes sexual attraction through teasing words and using a silly expression as above extracts, this may be assumed as a common pattern of sexual attraction among adolescents, specifically those who participated in this study. This may also lead to a little information being available on the different expressions of sexual desire among adolescents. Adolescents struggle to find their identity (related to physical contact such as hard holding and kissing), and for those who still hide from personal desire or still *malu* (shy), are influenced easily by their friends who are more aggressive. On the hand, adolescents can be emotionally unstable and socially immature: they do not want people to think that they are a "hick" (Roma, 17 years old) and do not have *pacar*.

The following extract from an in-depth interview provided further evidence of peer pressure on adolescents.

*Do you know why adolescents want to have a pacar?*



I myself do not have *cowok* or *pacar*, but a friend of mine really wants to have a *cowok* now (the second year in senior high school). She felt *risih* (uncomfortable), *gengsi* (loss of prestige) and *cemburu* (jealous) for not having a *pacar*. She always meets other friends sitting and chatting together with their *cowok*. That is why she really wants to have one and she also wants other friends to know that she has *pacar* too. She even said to me that she could *pacaran* (go out with opposite sex) with any *cowok* because she only wanted to have experience of having a *pacar*. She is really curious as other friends do *pacaran* too (Wati aged 16).

*What do you think of your friend's opinion?*

I think it was not good. We Indonesians still have *budaya* (culture), *adat* (tradition) and *agama* (religion). I do not intend to have a *pacar* now as my parents will not allow me to have one, because I am still in secondary school. It does not mean that they will not allow their children (including me) to do *pacaran*. But they always remind us (my sister and my brothers) of the consequences of having *pacar*. My parents said I can have *pacar* when I am in university or when I have got a job later. When I have *pacar*, I need to have a commitment that *pacaran* is OK, but we have to remember relationship restrictions based on *budaya* (culture), *adat* (tradition) and *agama* (religion). For Western people, holding each other or kissing on the road (i.e. in public) is common. Today's adolescents have followed the western tradition of holding each other and kissing in public places, such as in school; I sometimes see my friends holding or kissing in the class room, when we have a break, of course, when there is no teacher in the class (Lia, aged 16).

*Do you think your friends who have pacar have a particular commitment with their pacar or partner?*

No, I do not think they have a commitment. As I said earlier, most of them have *pacar* or partner because other students in their group have partners too. But again, they just *masa bodoh* (do not care) about the consequences of having a *pacar*, as my parents said. They do not have enough information about the consequences of having partner. Most of my friends said that "*Masa remaja adalah masa yang paling indah*" (adolescence is the most enjoyable time), so do not miss out on it (Eda aged 17).

These extracts illustrate adolescents have *pacar* because of friends' pressure due to their *gengsi* (prestige) with their friends who have *pacar*. They did not want their friends say that they are *kapungan* (old fashioned). There was an anecdote from young men illustrate that "if my friend has something interesting, I must get too; my friend has *pacar*, I have to find one for me too" (Roma, aged 17). As a result, some of them end up with *pacaran* (relationship) because of *malu* (shy or may be embarrassed) with their friends who have *pacar*. On female side, they tended not refuse if someone approaches her to be her *pacar*. This could be influenced by *budaya malu* (shy culture) to what Utomo (2000) has found in Java culture as '*nrimo*' (accept everything) or never refuse. With the case of adolescent girls in this study, *nrimo* has two meanings; shy to disagree to *pacaran*, or no comment because they agree to *pacaran*. Consequently, adolescents did not have a certain pattern to follow when to agree entering *pacaran* or when to postpone it.



Some respondents said that *remaja* in Makassar like to go *jalan-jalan* (walking together) with their peers, boys and girls in a group, especially on Saturday afternoon after school hours<sup>9</sup>. They usually spend their time at *Pantai Losari* (Losari Beach) and *Tanjung Bunga* (name of beach). These two beaches are also popular for *santai* (relaxed) because they are located in the inner city and people can enjoy their time there eating local food. Students sit together at sunset wearing their school uniforms, and enjoy traditional food such as *pisang epek* (pressed banana), *bakso* (beef ball soup), *pallabutung* (made of banana), *pisang ijo* (also made of banana) and *coto Makassar* (a typical Makassar beef soup). These places are popular not only for *remaja* (adolescents), but also for people of other age groups. The most popular of these two places is *Tanjung Bunga*, especially *malam minggu* (Saturday evening). This place is used to be *tempat maksiat* (place for engaging in immoral acts) for young couple: such as having sex, taking drugs and engaging in other sexual activities.

I was curious about *Tanjung Bunga* because some of my friends told me the story of this place. I went therefore, to this place when my school had a camp program nearby. The view was beautiful and very romantic. No wonder young couples like this place. I think...local businessman build small houses along the beach to rent to visitors. These houses are used by young people for sex and drug transactions (Irfandi aged 18).

**This Irfandi's story suggests that free sex may occur among young people in Makassar when they are visiting certain places. Similarly, Safitri (2001) conducted a study regarding adolescent sexual behavior in Jakarta. She found that adolescents spend more time with their peers in recreational places such as in cafés and pubs. She claims that some of young people who visited these places ended up with sexual activities. Young people visited these places for having fun and enjoy their time with other friends; going to these places when they have a personal problem or problems with their *pacar*, (Safitri 2001). By the end of their gathering, some of them engaged premarital relationship, which is *ujung-ujungnya* (finally) engage sexual relationship.**

## Parents pressure

Most respondents of this study had a *pacar* not only because of peer pressure, but also because of parental pressure. Adolescents illustrated that they had different pressure from peer and from parents. Their parents did not allow them to have *pacar*, paradoxically their friends seem to encourage them to have *pacar*. These two different pressures placed a particular burden on adolescents. As a result, adolescents have a *pacar* because of parental pressure for several reasons. Most parents did not allow their children to have *pacar* at an earlier age, due to their negative attitudes regarding premarital relationships (Tito 2001; Suarta 2002). Apart from this, parents were also denial of their children's sexuality (Suharto

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<sup>9</sup> School days in Makassar are from Monday to Saturday.



and Fauzan, key informants). As a result, children admitted that they have *pacar* just to have them as friends to share their problems, or when they feel bored at home because they did not have good communication with their parents.

*How about your parents? Do they allow you to have pacar?*

My parents are very strict. They would be very angry if they knew that we (their children) have *pacar*. That is why my older sister, when she had a *pacar*, she *sembunyi-sembunyi* (hiding) with her *cowok* because of my *ayah* (father). My *ibu* (mother) does not have any command over us, but my *ayah* is extremely strict (Rukiah aged 17).

My father has said that when he found out my sister or I had a *pacar*, he would ask my *cowok* to marry me and not allow me to go to school anymore. My mother told us a story about my father's cousin (my uncle), who killed his sister's boyfriend when she became pregnant. My mother told me that in our culture, having a single pregnant woman in the family is *siri*<sup>10</sup> (stigmatizing) and it humiliates our parents. Therefore, *ibu* always reminds us of the story (Rukiah aged 17).

My parents are not really as strict as your parents. They wrote a warning message on paper and hung it on the wall that *pacaran* (courtship) is not always enjoyable and people are not always as happy as young people imagine or expect. My father said the more we deal with our *pacar*, the more negative consequences we will have. Unfortunately, they did not tell us directly what these negative effects are. They just said "remember the restriction". Actually, parents usually more concern about their daughters than their sons. Boys could go out anytime with anyone, but girls should go out especially at night with someone who parents know and trust. When I have to go out in the evening time, I have to be home before 10pm. (Marha aged 17).

*Can you communicate with your parents about your pacar, then?*

It depends who your *pacar* is! (Rahmatiah aged 17 and Hendra aged 18).

Actually, I do not want to talk to them (parents) about my *pacar*, because we do not communicate with them openly as they both are very busy with their work. So, we meet each other at home mostly during the weekend. But I myself always go out with my friend at the weekend and our communication is not very open. Actually, they want to listen when we talk to them, my father told us his experience when he was young and he pointed out that today adolescence is different than his generation, especially our sexual behavior. He said that today young people *pacaran* and this creates a dangerous attitude, so young people are involved in more high-risk activity than those the last few generation. But he did not explain why. So we are confused and of course curious too....ya? (he sought agreement from other participants) (Irawan aged 17).

I could talk to my mother openly about any problems, except about my *pacar*, but of course not with my father. I do not know why...I communicate more with my best friend about my *pacar* than my

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<sup>10</sup> La Side (1977) in Idrus (2003) has identified 'siri' as having multiple meanings including shame, fear, humility, disgrace, envy, self-respect, honor and morality. Bugis Makassar people maintain positive *siri* as an honor and avoiding negative *siri* as a shame which shape female sexuality and as a family value (Idrus and Bennett 2003: 47).



mother. Because my close friend can understand my situation as she also has the same experience. But my mother, I would rather not talk to her about *pacaran* (Indah aged 17).

These above extracts suggest that some parents still treat their children very much as in the past, in terms of adolescents' premarital relationships. Parents believe that if they do so, they will end up in a sexual relationship. Unfortunately, parents do not explain why they disagree with their children having such relationships. Lack of communication may contribute to high-risk behavior among adolescents. Although some parents were aware of their mistakes, they did not know how to deal with their children's sexual behavior. A mother reported how she dealt with her daughter's question about *pacaran*.

When my daughter told me that her friend already had a *pacar*, I said to her it is ok, but 'you are still young', so you do not have to see you friend, *pacaran* is their own business. You will learn these things (i.e premarital relationship) when you are *dewasa* (mature). This is challenging me as I am still reluctant to answer my children's questions. I think...most of us as parents have the same problems. It is difficult.... what to do? I am still struggling to find the appropriate way to explain to my children about these things. At the same time, I acknowledge that we, parents are responsible to educate our children including these matters (refers to sexual information). We all know that our children have got information about *pacaran* from their friends and media. We are also aware that parents and school need to provide the correct information in order to protect them from unexpected risk. This is actually our mistake and it is really difficult....I do not know what to do. (Aida, a mother)

From this illustration, it seems parents were aware the importance of providing information to their children about *pacaran* and sex related issues, but they had difficulties to explain them in appropriate ways or expression. Obstacles to adolescents and parents interacting appear to be is due to tradition and possibly poor communication skills. Therefore, they expect teachers to be the main source of information for their children.

### **Media Pressure**

Most students of this study suggest that media mostly provides information about sexual entertainment. Pornography was easy to get and there was no legal regulation limiting young people accessing pornography and blue films (VCD and DVD) in Makassar and elsewhere in Indonesia (Suparto 2003). Several male students reported that they watched blue film with renting DVD and VCD in their friends home. Most f students claimed that most information which related to reproductive health and sexual information, the first source was DVD, VCD, pornography material and also TV programs.





## **Adolescents needs provide a window for a school-based sexuality education program**

The findings of this study revealed that adolescent changes and their sexual curiosity have become the major reasons for the visibility of premarital relationship and they are becoming sexually active at the earlier age. In their period of challenge, promise and change, they enter adolescence stage at early age such as the age of menarche has started between 9-12 (Utomo 1997; Pangkahila 1997b; Gunawan 2000; Safitri 2001; Situmorang 2001; Tito 2001; Situmorang 2003; Utomo 2003). Delayed marriage has become a period of experimentation is another reason of prevalence of premarital sexual relationship (WHO 1997; WHO, UNFPA et al. 1997; Bassett and Kaim 2000; Tanjung, Utamadi et al. 2001).

This study also revealed that this transitional period of young people's lives are full of conflict because adolescents' knowledge of sexuality and reproductive health issues is very limited. There is no formal agent which provides accurate information for them. School has not formally included sexuality and reproductive health education yet, parents are reluctance to communicate with their children about sex related issues which they believed these issues related to religious and cultural taboo. On the other hand, the influence of media which portrayed sex information was very vulgar seems to encourage young people in sexual preference (Kompas 2001b; Almasarweh 2003; Beamish 2003; Suparto 2003; Utomo 2003; Warsana 2003). Another major finding of related studies such as reproductive health related attitude and practices of school students are shaped by numerous forces (Birdthistle and Vince-Whitman 1997; Finger 2000). Adolescents have engaged sexual relationship because they have influenced by biological, social, economic, cultural (Bassett and Kaim 2000; Finger 2000). However, they had a little assistance from adult to help them in negotiating their changes and to address their sexual curiosity in appropriate manners. As a result, adolescent remain under informed about sexual matter.

Respondents' knowledge and understanding about sexuality in general were relatively very low for several reasons: adolescents did not receive enough information about sexuality and reproduction from school, parents, siblings or relatives. This is because communities in Makassar specifically, and Indonesia generally, believe that discussing sexuality openly with adolescents is considered inappropriate and taboo (as noted earlier). As a result, parents are



reluctant to talk to their children. At the same time, schools do not provide sexuality education for students.

Even though schools have introduced the topic of puberty to secondary school students, respondents felt that most teachers did not explain the subject to students confidently and openly. Therefore, clarity and accurate information is still needed. Information was also provided very late for them, especially for those who reached menarche in late elementary or earlier junior high school. In addition, adolescents in this study found more information through media and friends. Due to the unclear messages provided by schools and parents, adolescents might be misguided in relation to their understanding about being responsible for their reproductive behavior. There is a need to consider the appropriate time and age suitable for sexuality education given when menarche occurs and even before. As a result, adolescents found more information through media and friends. Therefore, there is a need to provide comprehensive sexuality education for secondary school students in order to help them to reduce their risk in their sexual behavior.

## **Conclusion**

The data presented in this study indicates that secondary school students are at high risk due to lack of accurate information about their sexuality and reproductive health. Adolescent's changes and curiosities indicated that there is a need for information about sexuality and its problems. Several evidences could be indicated as the needs on a school-based program. First, adolescents' curiosity of having *pacar* is high, but they lack understanding about prevention of pregnancy, abortion STIs risk, HIV/AIDS. Secondly, adolescents' attitude in premarital relationship is also put them in high risk. For example, *pacaran* 'backstreet'; they did not have any trust from their parents or their sibling, because most parents did not allow their children *pacaran* during their secondary school. As a consequence, emotional feeling ended up with unexpected result such as unwanted pregnancy due to lack of self-esteem, confidence and trust from olders. Third, adolescent were under pressure (cultural and religious pressure) for not having *pacar* and at the same time under pressure from friends and media images to have a *pacar*. In addition, they lack skills such as communication, decision- making, to help them decide the best choices for them. Therefore, helping them to make decisions, school is the best place where students can gain such skills.



The need to prioritize the voice of adolescent and their right to receive accurate sex information, the need to listen parents' expectation and also the need to understand teachers' perspective for teaching the subject. Then, there is a need to develop more precisely framework by policy makers to include all importance elements mentioned. Policy implication for future school policy and program of sexuality and reproductive health education in Makassar specifically and in Indonesia generally also recognize in this study. Some factors identified including the needs to reconstruct the current adolescent reproductive health program in Indonesia, and specifically to develop sexuality education comprehensively for secondary school curriculum. Further, the need of political will from the Indonesian government, in this case the Department of National Education in prioritizing sexuality and reproductive health education in educational agenda

Traditionally, adolescents related to their sexual behavior usually categorize into two different groups; those who are sexually active and those who are not sexually active (Finger 2000). From the data related to adolescent sexual behavior and protective behavior above, I argue that adolescents in this study can be categorized into four different levels of sexual behavior. The first group is adolescent who postpone having sex and they can be identified as 'delayers'. The second group who anticipate to initiate having sex later, this is 'anticipator'. The third group is adolescents who have sexual relationship with their *pacar* only and this group can be identified as 'single' and the last group is for those who have sex with multi partner (*pacar* and also with *lonte* (sex worker), they are identified as 'multiples'. Therefore, in these contexts of consideration, I suggest several points in order to support and to guide students in all they way their form their lives as they make their transition to adulthood.

1. There is a clear need to help secondary school students with accurate information about their changes and their sexual curiosity where school has been indicated as the one of among different settings to provide these related information as earlier as possible. From these different levels, I argue that providing accurate messages, the school-based program should take into consideration of these different groups of adolescents.
2. The school program should be realistic which is related to the developmental process for adolescent such as developing self-esteem, sense of hope, goals for the future and respect for others (Finger 2000). Realistic related to the way of adolescent see themselves as sexual being (Utomo 2000); and the way that sex is defined and



addressed should be matched with adolescents' sexual experiences (Smith, Kippax et al. 2000; Smith, Agius et al. 2002). The program should also be realistic that related to the young people understanding culturally and religiously acceptable and age appropriate.

3. This study suggests that sexuality and reproductive health messages should be tailored to address different groups mentioned. Developing sexuality education messages, the program should not only focus on two different groups; non sexual active and sexually active students. The messages should cover all the four groups; delayer, anticipator, single and multiple).
4. School should also mediate the interaction between the community, parents and local services in order to success the program comprehensively according to the needs of adolescents.

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