



## Exposure to Pornographic Media Among Adolescents Aged (20-24 Years)

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<p><b>Track Record Article</b></p> <p>Accepted: 13 September 2024 Revised: 8 November 2024 Published: 30 November 2024</p> <p><b>How to cite :</b> Maulita, M., Etrawati, F., &amp; Nasution, N. (2024). Exposure to Ponographic Media Among Adolescents Aged (20-24 Years). <i>Contagion : Scientific Periodical of Public Health and Coastal Health</i>, 6(2), 1243–1254.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Abstract</b></p> <p><i>Exposure to pornographic media among adolescents has become an increasingly concerning issue. High curiosity and technological advancements elevate the risk of adolescents being exposed to pornography. The aim of this study is to determine the exposure to pornographic media among university-level adolescents aged 20-24 years. This study used a quantitative approach with cross-sectional design. This study used secondary data from Nurhidayah Nasution in 2019. The research activities were conducted at Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang, South Sumatra, in September 2019. There were 140 teenagers ages 20 to 24 involved in this study which were selected using cluster sampling technique. Data processing was conducted through stages of checking for missing data, editing, coding, and tabulating. Data were analysed univariately, bivariately using the chi-square test, and multivariately using logistic regression tests with predictive models. The results of the analysis show that 39.3% of adolescents are exposed to pornography. There is a significant relationship between gender (<math>p=0.003</math>, <math>PR=2.518</math>, 95% CI (1.306-4.855)), peer behavior (<math>p=0.000</math>, <math>PR=4.000</math>, 95% CI (2.456-6.514)), peer norms (<math>p=0.000</math>, <math>PR=2.441</math>, 95% CI (1.549-3.846)), and lifestyle (<math>p=0.012</math>, <math>PR=1.747</math>, 95% CI (1.160-2.633)) with exposure to pornographic media among adolescents. Exposure to pornographic media is 8.7 times more likely to occur in adolescents with peers exhibiting negative behaviors after being controlled for the confounding variable of peer norms (<math>p=0.000</math>, <math>PR=8.742</math>, 95% CI (3.375-20.342)). As a result, a comprehensive approach is needed through supervision and education involving parents and cross-sectoral government to improve self-control and supervision on digital literacy so that adolescents can filter information wisely and avoid exposure to pornographic media.</i></p> <p><b>Keyword: Adolescent, Media, Pornography</b></p>
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### INTRODUCTION

The advancement of information technology has made it easier for teenagers to be exposed to the influence of pornographic media (Nasution, 2019; Rahayu *et al.*, 2020). Data from a survey conducted by the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (2018) involving 4,500 teenagers showed that almost all (97%) had accessed pornography, including university students as part of the older adolescent group. Throughout 2022, there were 59 reported cases of sexual violence in South Sumatra, suspected to be linked to the consumption of pornography, based on investigative findings (Abdullah, 2024; Indonesian Child Protection Commission, 2024). In response to this situation, the government has blocked 1,950,794 negative contents spread through websites, social media, and other file-sharing networks (Ministry of Communication & Information Technology, 2023).

Gradual exposure to pornography can trigger risky sexual behavior through complex mechanisms. This process begins with addiction, where individuals are driven to access the

content more frequently. Then, escalation occurs, leading them to seek more vulgar material. It occurs through repeated exposure to a stimulus that initially triggers anxiety, but over time leads to a reduction in emotional reactions, allowing the individual to respond more calmly (desensitization). Eventually, sexual behaviors that were previously considered taboo begin to be accepted as normal and expressed in real life (act out) (Tindaon, 2018).

Adolescents exposed to pornography often become sexually active at an early age (Pathmendra *et al.*, 2023). A survey by Honestdocs (2019) on the sexual behavior of Indonesians, conducted with 6,877 respondents, revealed that around 21% of early adolescents admitted to having sexual intercourse daily due to their knowledge about sex (pornography). Additionally, the National Survey reported that about 4.5% of adolescent boys and 0.7% of adolescent girls have engaged in sexual intercourse, increasing the risk of unwanted pregnancy, abortion, and the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases (Etrawati *et al.*, 2024). This is evidenced by a report from Indonesian Ministry of Health (2022), which stated that the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STIS) in Indonesia reached 11,133 cases in 2021. In 2024, Indonesia reported a total of 9,356 cases of sexual violence, with 178 cases occurring in South Sumatra, recently, a particularly alarming incident involved the rape of a 14-year-old girl in Palembang in September 2024, where four students, believed to be influenced by pornography addiction, were implicated (Ministry of Women's Empowerment & Child Protection, 2024)

Access to pornography can intensify negative emotions such as anger, fear, and sadness, leading to self-dissatisfaction among teenagers (Cerbara *et al.*, 2023). Repeated exposure to this content often creates unrealistic expectations of real relationships, so when reality does not meet these expectations, teenagers become frustrated and increasingly trapped in negative emotions. Additionally, internal conflicts arise, especially if the behavior contradicts their moral or religious values, resulting in increased stress, anxiety, and feelings of guilt and shame, which worsen their mental health (Yati & Aini, 2018).

The exposure of adolescents to pornographic media is caused by several factors. Bandura, in his Social Learning Theory, explains that humans learn through observing their environment due to their tendency to imitate. Exposure to pornographic media can reinforce negative reinforcement for adolescents, such as temporary pleasure or satisfaction, which can strengthen imitative behavior (Dewi *et al.*, 2023). This model supports the explanation that sociodemographic/personal conditions (such as gender) and external factors (peer behavior, peer norms, lifestyle, and sexual reproductive health programs) can also influence a person's exposure to pornographic media (Tarmizi & Sulaiman, 2022).

Adolescent exposure to pornography is on the rise. A survey by NPHAR conducted by Ministry of Women's Empowerment & Child Protection (2022) revealed that 66.6% of males and 62.3% of females in Indonesia have watched pornographic content. Gender also influences the frequency and perception of pornography exposure, with male libido responding more quickly to both physical and psychological stimuli than females, making them more susceptible to exposure to pornographic content (Rahayu *et al.*, 2020; Andriyani & Ardina, 2021).

Peer behavior and norms are the most influential determinants of adolescent exposure to pornographic media. Negative behaviors, such as frequently watching pornographic content, can encourage other adolescents to do the same (Very, 2020). Within peer groups, there is a system of norms and values that shapes adolescents' views on sexuality. When a group of teenagers normalise pornography and promiscuous sex in dating, it can establish norms that make such behavior seem acceptable and encouraging other teenagers to follow (Wulandari, 2020). This phenomenon shows how peer group norms can influence an individual's decision to engage in behaviors that were previously considered taboo. Therefore, a more equitable and effective sex education program is essential in Indonesia, considering that many teenagers do not receive adequate education and are at risk of falling into pornography.

Lifestyle and sexual reproductive health programs also influence the phenomenon of pornography exposure among adolescents. Another study found that 79% of respondents who engaged in risky lifestyles, such as staying out late and frequently visiting nightclubs, ended up being exposed to pornographic media and experiencing addiction effects (Asfia & Ferial, 2023). The government has begun integrating sexual reproductive health programs into subjects such as Biology, Counseling, Physical Education, Religion, and Character Education as sources of adolescent education (Directorate of Primary School, 2020; Hermawan, 2020). However, the implementation of these programs remains uneven, with approximately 29% of adolescents in Indonesia not receiving adequate sexual education (Murniati *et al.*, 2021). The lack of knowledge about sexuality drives adolescents to seek information from unhealthy sources, namely pornography. Therefore, this study examines the exposure to pornographic media among adolescents aged 20-24.

## **METHODS**

This research was conducted at Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang (UMP) in September 2019. This research processes secondary data derived from Nurhidayah Nasution. The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire that had undergone validity and reliability testing with 30 students. Respondents were selected using cluster sampling to create

a representative sample of the population. Out of 7 faculties and 24 study programs at UMP, 6 study programs were randomly selected. Subsequently, furthermore, respondents in this study were randomly selected from the 2016-2018 undergraduate student database (including the number of students, name, year of entry, major, and active status). The minimum sample size was calculated using the hypothesis testing formula for the difference between two proportions, resulting in 140 respondents.

This study aimed to identify the influencing factors in media pornography exposure among university-age adolescents (20-24 years), using a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional research design. The independent variables in this study include gender, peer behavior, peer norms, lifestyle, and sexual reproductive health programs, while the dependent variable is exposure to pornographic media. The research data criteria were complete data without missing. Data processing was conducted through stages of checking for missing data, editing, coding, and tabulating. The data analysis procedure included univariate analysis to describe the characteristics of the variables, bivariate analysis using chi-square tests to examine correlations between variables, and multivariate analysis using binary logistic regression with predictive model, to determine which variables were most dominant. This research received approval from the Ethical Research Committee of the Faculty of Public Health, Universitas Sriwijaya, with approval number 304/UN9.1.10/KKE/2019.

## RESULTS

**Table 1. Univariate Analysis of Respondent Characteristics**

Variable	Total Respondent	
	n	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	98	70.0%
Female	42	30.0%
<b>Peer Behavior</b>		
Negative	56	40.0%
Positive	84	60.0%
<b>Peer Norms</b>		
Permissive	64	45.7%
Not Permissive	76	54.3%
<b>Lifestyle</b>		
Risk	57	40.7%
Not Risk	83	59.3%
<b>Sexual Reproductive Health Programs</b>		
No	117	83.6%
Yes	23	16.4%

Variable	Total Respondent	
	n	%
<b>Pornographic Media Exposure</b>	55	39.3%
Exposed	85	60.7%
Not Exposed		
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 1 presents the results of the univariate analysis showing the characteristics of 140 respondents at Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang. The majority of respondents (70%) were male. Nearly half of the respondents (40%) exhibited negative peer behavior, and almost half (45.7%) had permissive peer norms. Almost half of the respondents (40.7%) engaged in risky lifestyles. Additionally, it was noted that the majority of respondents (83.6%) did not participate in reproductive health programs. Meanwhile, nearly half of the respondents (39.3%) were exposed to pornography.

**Table 2. Bivariate Analysis Result**

Variable	Pornographic Media Exposure				Total n (%)	<i>p-value</i>	PR
	Exposed		Not Exposed				
	n	%	n	%			
<b>Gender</b>							
Male	47	(48)	51	(52)	98 (100)	0.003	2.518 (1.306-4.855)
Female	8	(19)	34	(81)	41 (100)		
<b>Peer Behaviour</b>							
Negative	40	(71.4)	16	(28.6)	56 (100)	0.000	4.000 (2.456-6.514)
Positive	15	(17.9)	69	(82.1)	84 (100)		
<b>Peer Norms</b>							
Permissive	37	(57.8)	27	(42.2)	64 (100)	0.000	2.441 (1.549-3.846)
Not Permissive	18	(23.7)	58	(76.3)	76 (100)		
<b>Lifestyle</b>							
Risk	30	(52.6)	27	(47.4)	57 (100)	0.012	1.747 (1.160-2.633)
Not Risk	25	(30.1)	58	(69.9)	83 (100)		
<b>Sexual Reproductive Health Programs</b>							
No	45	(38.5)	72	(61.5)	117 (100)	0.828	0.885 (0.526-1.487)
Yes	10	(45.3)	13	(56.5)	23 (100)		

Table 2 displays the relationship between the dependent and independent variables, with a  $p$ -value  $< 0.005$  indicating a significant relationship. Male adolescents showed a significant relationship with pornography exposure ( $p=0.003$ ) with a prevalence ratio (PR=2.518, 95% CI (1.306-4.855)), meaning they were twice as likely to be exposed compared to female adolescents. Adolescents with peers exhibiting negative behavior also showed a significant relationship with pornography exposure ( $p=0.000$ ) with a prevalence ratio (PR=4.000, 95% CI (2.456-6.514)), indicating they were four times more likely to be exposed. Similarly, permissive peer norms significantly correlated ( $p=0.000$ ) with a prevalence ratio (PR=2.441, 95% CI (1.549-3.846)), increasing the risk of exposure to pornography by two

times. On the other hand, risky lifestyles showed a significant relationship with pornography exposure ( $p=0.012$ ), but with a relatively small prevalence ratio (PR=1.747, 95% CI (1.160-2.633)), indicating a minor influence as the exposure risk was 1, making it equal for both groups. The variable of reproductive health programs did not show a statistically significant correlation with pornography exposure ( $p=0.828$ ), as evidenced by a  $p$ -value  $> 0.05$ , with a prevalence ratio (PR=0.885, 95% CI (0.526-1.487)), meaning that adolescents not participating in the program had a 0.8 chance compared to those who participated in reproductive health programs to experience pornography exposure. The confidence interval that includes the number 1 indicates that there is no clear relationship between exposure and this condition.

**Table 3. Multivariate Analysis Results**

Variable	<i>p-value</i>	PR	95%CI	
			Lower	Upper
Peer Behaviour	0.000	8.742	3.757	20.342
Peer Norms	0.063	2.225	0.957	5.176

The results of the multivariate analysis using logistic regression (Table 3) indicate that peer behavior was the most significant variable ( $p=0.000$ ) with a prevalence ratio (PR=8.742, 95% CI (3.375-20.342)), confirming the relationship between exposure and negative behavior. This indicates that adolescents with peers who exhibit negative behaviors, such as having a girlfriend or watching pornographic content, are 8.7 times more likely to be exposed to pornography compared to those with positively behaving peers, even after controlling for the confounding variable of peer norms.

## DISCUSSION

Adolescents experience rapid physical growth and sexual maturity, which, along with the development of sexual desires, makes them vulnerable to pornography. The analysis shows that males tend to access pornography more frequently, making them more susceptible to exposure compared to females (Berger *et al.*, 2019; Prihandini, 2020; Pawlikowska-Gorzelańczyk *et al.*, 2023). This tendency is linked to neurobiological changes in adolescent males, which increase dopamine levels and sexual arousal (Mahmoud *et al.*, 2023). This explains why males are more prone to accessing pornography. In this context, self-control becomes a key factor in preventing exposure, especially for male adolescents (Mahfudho, 2019) as it helps individuals manage their biological responses, enabling wiser decision-making. While biological factors play a role, self-control remains crucial in reducing this behavior.

The findings also indicate that peer influence contributes to adolescents' exposure to pornography. This aligns with the concept of Social Learning Theory, where adolescents often

imitate the behavior of their peers to gain acceptance in their community. This can be observed through Bandura's (1969) modeling approach, when seeing peers who often watch pornography, there will be a sense of interest in adolescents, the behavior will continue to be remembered so that it becomes retention in their memory, then they try to reproduce the recorded behavior, so that they finally adopt the behavior with the motivation to be the same and accepted in the community. Therefore, high self-efficacy is needed so that adolescents can control the urge to access pornography and be able to mingle in peer groups without being influenced by their negative behavior (Nurhayati & Fajar, 2017).

Furthermore, peer norms play a role in determining adolescents' attitudes and perceptions about sexuality. Studies show that half of adolescents have permissive peer norms, which makes them twice as vulnerable to pornography exposure (Sanyoto & Hutagalung, 2021). This permissive attitude allows behaviors that are usually not in accordance with social norms to become more accepted in the group due to the normalization of behavior (Irma *et al.*, 2022). When adolescents are in an environment where pornography is considered normal, they tend to feel more comfortable accessing and consuming it, resulting in reduced shame and increased tolerance of risky sexual behavior. Group norms that portray sexuality and pornography as attractive also influence adolescents' perceptions of what is considered acceptable sexual behavior.

Adolescent pornography exposure is also influenced by individual lifestyle. The study reveals that half of the adolescents lead risky lifestyles. Mola & Nurhadiyanto (2023) found that excessive dating and weak family relationships are part of risky lifestyles that can lead adolescents to pornography. Parental guidance plays a crucial role in shaping lifestyles, as it serves as the main foundation for forming children's character and behavior. One type of parenting style often discussed is permissive parenting, characterized by a lack of supervision and a laissez-faire attitude, which often contributes to risky lifestyles. The absence of parental direction and control leads adolescents raised in this environment to have a limited understanding of the consequences of their actions, making them more susceptible to influences from their surroundings and media that promote risky sexual behaviors (Devi *et al.*, 2023). As a result, these adolescents are more vulnerable to making risky decisions without considering the adverse impacts, such as the surge in sexually transmitted infections among teenagers in Palembang City (South Sumatra Provincial Health Department, 2024). Research also indicates that adolescents with permissive parenting styles are more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviors compared to those raised in democratic or authoritative environments (Widagdo, 2022; Razak & Amat, 2024). Therefore, early parental supervision is essential to prevent

pornography exposure. Parents should adopt an authoritative parenting style, which offers a balance between demands and support, contributing to the child's healthy emotional and social development (Purba *et al.*, 2020; Ulfah, 2020). Unlike permissive parenting, which tends to leave children without clear boundaries, authoritative parenting involves parents providing consistent guidance and rules while also being responsive to their children's needs and emotions (Bening & Diana, 2022; Nie *et al.*, 2022). By applying an authoritative parenting style, parents can help children understand the consequences of their actions. This style also fosters an environment of open communication and healthy learning, which, in turn, can reduce children's tendency to engage in risky behaviors.

Sexual reproductive health programs do not directly target reducing pornography exposure, as their primary focus is different. These programs often concentrate on aspects such as contraception, sexual health, and sexually transmitted infections, while pornography exposure is more related to behavior and media consumption (Tindaon, 2022). This study indicates no relationship between sexual reproductive health programs and adolescent pornography exposure. Adolescents tend to perceive that the consequences of such behaviors are not as severe as presented in these programs, thus diminishing the effectiveness of sexual reproductive health education (Sinaga *et al.*, 2020). To address these issues, a comprehensive approach is necessary, starting with the development of positive character and values through parental guidance. Parents play a critical role in supervising their children's media usage, providing appropriate guidance, and supporting children's moral development through good examples and attitudes. The government also needs to collaborate with the health and information sectors to assist parents and educators in monitoring media literacy and healthy behaviors. A strategic step is to incorporate education about the dangers of media and pornography usage into the school curriculum, as well as to promote healthy internet use to prevent the spread of pornography and risky sexual behaviors (Surahmat *et al.*, 2022). Further research is necessary to explore variations in the impact of sexual reproductive health programs on adolescent behavior related to pornography.

## CONCLUSIONS

The rate of adolescent exposure to pornographic media is 39.3%. Neurobiological changes in male adolescents make them more susceptible to pornography exposure. Adolescents who interact with peers engaging in negative behaviors, such as watching pornographic content, dating, and risky sexual behaviors are 8.7 times more likely to access pornography compared to those with peers who exhibit positive behaviors, such as healthy live



behavior, maintaining ethical boundaries, engaging in constructive social activities, after controlling for the peer norm variable (OR=8.742). To prevent exposure to pornographic media, comprehensive health education and digital literacy are essential to enhance adolescents' self-control. It is expected that the government can collaborate with the health and informatics sector in monitoring media literacy and healthy behavior in adolescents. This step can be done by integrating the topic of the dangers of pornography and media as teaching materials in schools. This approach is expected to reduce the phenomenon of rampant pornography in adolescents.

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