

## Church Youth Sexuality in Surabaya: Teachings, Attitudes, and Behaviors

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The aim of this study is to describe the teachings regarding sexuality among Christian churches in Surabaya, sexual attitudes, and sexual behaviors of the church youths. Six church leaders from six churches were interviewed and 267 church youths filled anonymous sexual attitude and sexual behavior questionnaire. The result shows that most of the churches adopt conservative teachings. These teachings are consistent with sexual attitudes of the church youths. However, the behaviors are not always consistent with the attitudes, mainly on the autonomous sexual behaviors. In term of sexual abstinence, 85.8% of respondents report never engaged in sexual intercourse in their lifetime. The implications and limitations are discussed.

*Keywords:* sexual attitudes, sexual behaviors, church youth, Surabaya.

Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan pengajaran tentang seksualitas, sikap seksual, dan perilaku seksual remaja-pemuda gereja Kristen di Surabaya. Enam pemimpin dari enam gereja diwawancarai dan 267 remaja-pemuda gereja mengisi kuesioner anonim tentang sikap seksual dan perilaku seksual. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kebanyakan gereja partisipan mengadopsi pengajaran yang konservatif. Pengajaran ini konsisten dengan sikap seksual remaja-pemuda gereja. Namun perilaku seksual remaja-pemuda gereja tersebut tidak selalu konsisten dengan sikapnya, terlebih pada perilaku seksual otonomus. Terkait pemantangan seksual, sejumlah 85.8% responden melaporkan tidak pernah melakukan hubungan seksual (*intercourse*). Implikasi dan keterbatasan penelitian didiskusikan.

*Kata kunci:* sikap seksual, perilaku seksual, remaja-pemuda gereja, Surabaya

*"Religion is an enormously powerful part of American culture, almost as powerful as sex"*

David Kelsey (as cited in Haffner, 2004)

Many large-scale sexual behavior surveys have been conducted in North America – from Alfred Kinsey's survey in 1949 involving 16,000 participants, to *National Health and Social Life Survey* (NHSLS) in 1990s which is claimed nationally representative to US population (as cited in Kelly, 2006). The NHSLS survey concludes that most Americans are relatively satisfied in their sexual life. Several surveys have been also conducted in various countries outside North America and Europe, such as in Iran (Mohammadi et al., 2006), Taiwan (Lo & Wei 2005), and Ghana (Addai, 2000).

In Indonesia, there are a number of surveys regarding sexual behavior. World Health Organization (WHO)

surveyed global sexual behavior, including in Indonesia (Wellings et al., 2006). The survey studied the age of first intercourse and the age of first marriage. The result indicated that in Indonesia, the median age of first intercourse is 24.5 year for male and 18.5 year for female. The median age of first marriage is 24.1 year for male and 18.1 year for female. Another study conducted by Pisani, Dadun, Suchaya, Kamil, and Jazan (2003) focused on sexual behavior of 650 drug users in three big cities in Indonesia. The result revealed that two third of the participants are sexually active, 48% have more than one sexual partner, 40% have made contact with sex worker during the last one year, and only 10% use condom consistently. In Surabaya, a study on 87 college students by Hartono (2004) showed that 7.2% of female respondents and 27.7% of male respondents has engaged in sexual activity at a time in their life.

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Discussing sexuality in Indonesia must not be separated from religious issues. Religion is a dominant force regulating behaviors in Indonesia, especially moral behaviors. And, sexuality is one of the most important topics in many religious ethics literatures (Stassen & Gushee, 2008).

Religion and sexuality are often viewed as incompatible each other (Haffner, 2004). Sexologists are religion-blind, and theologians are reluctant to discuss sexuality, except in forbidding any sexual activities. The quotation in the beginning of this paper is not just applied in America, but also in Indonesia. Sex and religion are two dominant forces, and consistently influencing each other.

Historically, religion has certain attachment with sexuality. Prehistoric spiritual traditions focused on worship to mother earth as the source of living. This was expressed in various fertility goddesses. Sexual practices are involved in these worships. Between 1800-1500 B.C., the concept of God became penis-centered, marked by male gods in traditional cultures of China, India, Middle-East, and Greece (Kelly, 2006). Empirically, studies on religion and sexuality have been conducted in various religious traditions such as Islam (Hidayatullah, 2003), Hinduism (Lidke, 2003), Judaism (Alpert, 2003), Taoism (Yao, 2003), native American traditions (Cordero & Currans, 2003), African spiritual traditions (Conner, 2003), and Christianity (Deutchman, 2008; Countryman, 2007; Sands, 2000).

Among those various religious traditions, the position of religion in viewing sexuality can be divided into two categories. Some religions celebrate sexuality and view body-spirit as a harmonious matter. Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Tantra are belonged to this category. They perceive sexuality from its creative potential and spiritual growth (Kelly, 2006). On the other side are religions which restrict any sexually activities. This position is dominant among Abrahamic faiths – Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. They consider sexuality as a “flesh” desire which confront divine endeavors (Parrinder, as cited in Strong, DeVault, Sayad, & Yarber, 2005). Accordingly, Max Weber argues that essential feature of religion is hostility toward sexuality (as cited in Aldridge, 2000). Moreover, he explains why religion fervently restrict sexual desire is because sexuality is the strongest irrational force within human. Therefore, religion tried as much as possible to tame it. Stassen and Gushee (2008, p. 373) call sexuality as “a strong and mysterious dimension of human’s personality”, so that every social forces will try to control it, including religion.

One example of this relation is church’s attitude toward masturbation. Churches in 19<sup>th</sup> century condemned masturbation practices, considered this act as a serious sin, and claimed masturbation could cause physical weakness, insanity, and death. At present, Roman Catholic still considers masturbation as a serious act which internally disturbing one’s life (Patton, as cited in Strong et al., 2005). On the other hand, scientific evidence shows that masturbation has no negative consequences (Kelly, 2006). Another example is church’s attitude toward premarital sexual activity. In 1969, only 32% of US population have positive attitude toward premarital sexual activity. But these days, premarital sexual activity is largely acceptable among US societies, except among conservative religious adherents such as Catholics and fundamental Protestants (Strong et al., 2005).

The current study focuses on Christianity as the second largest religion in Indonesia after Islam. The number of Christians in Indonesia is 19.906.679 people or 9.5% of Indonesian population (Departemen Agama, 2005). The participants of this study are church leaders and church youths in Surabaya.

Theologically, in the Bible there are scriptures which explicitly teach sexuality. For instance, in the book of Leviticus there are at least 75 verses regulating sexual conducts of ancient Israelites (Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia [LAI], 1990). Another example is the story of Onan in the book of Genesis. This story is frequently cited in addressing the importance of sexual obedience. In this story God killed Onan who was not obedient to God in term of sexual conduct.

But Er, Judah’s firstborn, was wicked in the LORD’s sight; so the LORD put him to death. Then Judah said to Onan, “Sleep with your brother’s wife and fulfill your duty to her as a brother-in-law to raise up offspring for your brother.” But Onan knew that the child would not be his; so whenever he slept with his brother’s wife, he spilled his semen on the ground to keep from providing offspring for his brother. What he did was wicked in the LORD’s sight; so the LORD put him to death also. (Genesis 38:7-10, New International Version [NIV], Biblegateway, 2010)

However, biblical scriptures are often interpreted differently by various churches. For instance, the issue of procreative nature of sex is frequently referred to Genesis 1: 28 which states: “God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the

earth and subdue it.” (NIV, Biblegateway, 2010). This scripture often used as a reference to argue that initially God created sex for procreation purpose. But another literature uses Genesis 2:24-25 to argue for recreational nature of sex: “That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.” In this verse, God said about marriage and sex, but not mentioning procreation at all (Haffner, 2004).

Christian churches have different sexual attitudes depend on the denominations. Cochran and Beeghley (1991) found that the most conservative denominations in term of sexuality are Baptist and non-mainline Protestant churches, and the most permissive is Jewish church. While Galvan, Collins, Kanouse, Pantoja, and Golinelli (2007) found that Catholic and Evangelical denominations have the least adherents who engage in unprotected sexual activity, compared to other denominations<sup>1</sup>. In general, recent research has found significant relationship between religiosity and sexuality (Galvan, Collins, Kanouse, Pantoja, & Golinelli, 2007; Hardy & Raffaelli, 2003; Levkowitz, Gillen, Shearer, and Boone, 2004; Rostosky, Wilcox, Wright, & Randall, 2004). However, more research is needed to understand the complex dynamics between sexuality and various religious traditions in Indonesia.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to describe the teaching regarding sexuality, sexual attitude, and sexual behavior of Christian churches in Surabaya. The teaching, attitude, and behavior which are described includes (adapted from NHSLS survey as cited in Kelly, 2006): premarital sexual activity with partner (non-genital oral stimulation: kiss on the cheek, kiss on the lips without involving saliva [dry kiss], kiss on the mouth involving saliva [wet kiss]; stimulation of erogenous zones [petting], and vaginal intercourse), extramarital sexual activity with partner, and autonomous sexual activity (pornography consumption and masturbation).

The role of church in teaching sexuality is considered important by the church leaders, both for theological and practical concern. A study by Guidry, Torrence, Moore, and Larke (2007) on African-American church leaders

shows that 100% of the leaders agree that it is the role of the church to teach sexuality, as well as parents and school. The leaders in that study argue that sex education conducted by church is expected to keep sexual attitude and behaviors of the church youths always in accordance with the Bible. However, only 58% of the participating churches already have sex education program. Practically, they hope the number of sexually active church youths is less than other youth communities outside the church.

In this study, sexual attitude is defined as the one's agreement/disagreement toward certain sexual practices: premarital, extramarital, and autonomous sexual activities (NHSLS, as cited in Kelly, 2006). Empirical studies have found the relationship between sexual attitude and other variables. Levkowitz et al. (2004) argue that sexual attitude can predict future sexual behavior among teens that were not sexually active. A study by Mohammadi et al. (2006) on youths in Teheran concludes that the lack of contraceptive knowledge, STIs, and the physiology of reproduction are serious threat for safe and responsible sexual decision making and reproductive health in general. Accordingly, Lo and Wei (2005) identify that permissive sexual attitude positively correlated with pornography consumption.

A study similar to the current study was conducted in two churches in Nigeria (Nweneka, 2007). From 341 participants involved, 65% have sexual experience in the past. Only 19% reported abstain from sexual activity in the past 19 months. Nweneka (2007) concludes that there is no difference between church youths' sexual behavior and other youth communities in Nigeria. The author suggests Nigerian churches to be proactive in teaching sexuality to their youths.

Thus, as the previous study in Nigeria, this study is expected to contributing knowledge to churches and other institutions which concern for congregants' sexual life. Churches can also utilize the result of this study to evaluate whether or not their teachings is in accordance with church youths' attitude. The data on sexual behavior can also useful to help church leaders design educational program to enhance youths' sexual health and wellbeing.

## Method

Six Christian churches in Surabaya involved in this study. The member of these churches range from 1,000 to 17,000 people. The total number of people committed in these churches exceeds 25,000 people. One leader

1 Galvan et al. (2007) categorizes church denominations into: (a) Catholic, including Roman Catholic and other Catholic; (b) Evangelical, including Apostolic, Assembly of God, Baptist, Newborn, Reformed, Church of God, Holiness, Jehovah Witness, Pentecost, Salvation Army, Sanctified, and Seventh Day Adventist Church; (c) Other Christians, including: *Disciples of Christ*, *United Church of Christ*, *Episcopalian*, Lutheran, Methodist, Mormon, Orthodox, Presbyterian, Protestant, and Quaker. Not all of these denominations exist in Indonesia. There are also denominations in Indonesia which have no foreign affiliations.

from each church was interviewed in an audio-taped-semi-structure interview to get the data regarding the teaching of each church in term of sexuality: premarital, extramarital, autonomous sexual activities, and Biblical scriptures related to those teachings. The interview tapes are transcribed, then the data categorized according to the interview guide.

Sexual attitude and behavior questionnaire are given to 267 church youths (121 male, 137 female, 9 did not give the sex information) of these six churches. Their age range from 15-35 years, the mean is 22.6 years. Most of the participants are holding high school certificate (114 participants) and bachelor degree (95 participants). As many as 148 participants are single, 77 in a dating relationship, 14 married, and 12 engaged.

Considering the questions could make participants feel hesitate or reluctant, the questionnaire is intentionally designed to be anonymous. It was also explained that participants have the right to refuse filling the questionnaire without any consequences, but if they willing to fill, they are gently asked to fill it honestly. Most of the questionnaires are distributed by youth leaders of these churches, only one church allowed me to distribute the questionnaires myself. The response rate is relatively low, i.e. 44.5%. There is one church which was cancelled as participant because the youth leaders refused the questionnaire, although I have already gotten the permission from the top leader. Some reasons from the church leaders regarding the low response rate are: (a) church youths are reluctant to participate because it is uncommon to fill questionnaire at church, (b) the sexual questions in the questionnaire and the explanation that this survey is voluntarily (without any consequences) make church youths prefer not to participate.

Sexual attitude questionnaire consisted of eight questions, asking the participants to respond on certain sexual activities. Each sexual activity is clearly defined on the questionnaire, referring to Kelly (2006). Participants can choose three options: acceptable, unacceptable, or others (filling the blank). Sexual behavior questionnaire consisted of the same eight questions, but the options are: never engaged, engaged in the past 12 months, and engaged but not in the past 12 months.

The result of the questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques.

## Findings

In this section, the findings are explained in this arrangement: first, the teachings of the churches regarding sexuality; second, sexual attitude of the church youths; and last, sexual behavior of the church youths.

### Teachings Regarding Sexuality

All six church leaders are relatively agreed each others in discussing sexuality. With the Church IV as an exception, all churches completely do not accept petting, premarital and extramarital sexual intercourse, masturbation, and pornography consumption. Dry kiss and wet kiss are forbidden and/or not encouraged by all churches as well (still excluding Church IV). Kiss on the cheek is acceptable by three churches and not encouraged by three churches.

Table 1 summarizes the church's teachings on sexuality:

Table 1

*Church's Teaching on Sexuality*

	Kiss on the Cheek	Dry Kiss	Wet Kiss	Petting	Intercourse	Extra-marital	Masturbation	Pornography
Church I	Acceptable	Not encouraged	Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Unacceptable
Church II	Not encouraged	Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Unacceptable
Church III	Not encouraged	Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Unacceptable
Church IV	Acceptable	Acceptable (if faithful & plan to be married)	Acceptable (if faithful & plan to be married)	Acceptable (if faithful & plan to be married)	Acceptable (if faithful & plan to be married)	Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Unacceptable
Church V	Acceptable	Not encouraged	Not encouraged	Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Unacceptable
Church VI	Not encouraged	Not encouraged	Not encouraged	Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Unacceptable

Biblical scriptures which are used as references by these churches in teaching sexuality are shown in Table 2 (NIV, Biblegateway, 2010).

Almost all churches forbid sexual activities outside marriage, both autonomous and with partner. Abstinence is the only choice. How these leaders compromise the long -and getting longer- abstinent period between puberty (which is moving younger) and marriage (which is moving older)? Most church leaders believe that sexual drive can be controlled, thus abstinence is a realistic option. Some methods they believe can control sexual drive:

“We help these youths spend their time in many positive activities, so that their mind will not just focus on sex.” (Leader of Church II)

“Sports/physical activities, because sex drive is basically just a physical tension.” (Leader of Church V)

“One who is full loathes honey from the comb (Proverb 27:7). If we satisfied with our relationship with God, (sexual) temptation is not a problem. (Leader of Church VI)

From those interview quotations, church leaders convinced that sexual drive can be controlled by spiritual satisfaction and positive activities such as sports.

### Church Youths’ Sexual Attitude and Behavior

In terms of sexual attitudes, church youths are relatively in accordance with the teachings of the church. More than 90% of participants state that petting, premarital intercourse, extramarital intercourse, masturbation, and pornography consumption are unacceptable. Moreover, more than 70% of participants respond negatively on dry and wet kiss. While 60.7% say that kiss on the cheek is acceptable.

Table 2  
*Scriptures Related to Sexuality*

Scripture	Interpretation (by the church leaders)
Genesis 1:28a “God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number...”	Blessed by God first (in the holy matrimony) then one can enjoy sex (fruitful and increase in number)
Matthew 5:28 “But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”	Sexual sin is not just happened when you do something, but even when you intentionally think about it, that is already a sin.
Hebrew 13:4 “Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.”	Sexual holiness is very important for Christians
I Corinthians 7:4 “The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife.”	Sex should not be enjoyed outside marriage
Genesis 38: 7-10 “But Er, Judah’s firstborn, was wicked in the LORD’s sight; so the LORD put him to death. Then Judah said to Onan, “Sleep with your brother’s wife and fulfill your duty to her as a brother-in-law to raise up offspring for your brother.” But Onan knew that the child would not be his; so whenever he slept with his brother’s wife, he spilled his semen on the ground to keep from providing offspring for his brother. What he did was wicked in the LORD’s sight; so the LORD put him to death also.”	Sexual sin is very serious to God.
Exodus 20:14 “You shall not commit adultery”	
Matthew 19: 1-12 (A passage on divorce)	Marriage and divorce are important, because Jesus & apostle Paul teaches about it specifically.
I Corinthians 7:1-16 (A passage on married life)	
I Corinthians 3: 16 “Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst?”	Holiness and purity are important, because each Christian is God temple.

However, there are discrepancies between sexual behaviors of these church youths with their attitudes, except on the ‘kiss on the cheek’ behavior. The numbers of participants who respond “unacceptable” on sexual attitude questionnaire are always higher than those who respond “never” on sexual behavior questionnaire. The largest discrepancy is on pornography consumption (unacceptable: 93.3%, never: 44.9%) and masturbation (unacceptable: 91%, never: 55.4%). The percentages of participants which are not answering questions on sexual behavior are also always higher than sexual attitude questionnaire. Table 3 summarizes the findings on sexual attitude and behavior of church youths.

Male and female participants have slightly different patterns, especially in the autonomous sexual behaviors both masturbation and pornography consumption. Male participants are scoring higher than female participants. Table 4 and 5 show the comparison.

Among participants who report engaged in masturbation and pornography consumption, the largest proportion engaged less than once a month. But the number of participants not answering this item is also very high (see Table 6).

Among the participants who report consuming pornography, internet is the most popular media (44%) as indicated in Table 7.

**Table 3**  
*Sexual Attitude and Behavior of Church Youths*

	Attitude				Total	Behavior				Total
	Accept able	Unaccept able	Others (e.g. only in certain situations)	Not answering		Engaged in the last 12 months	Engaged but not in the past 12 months	Never / N/A	Not answering	
Kiss on the cheek	60.7%	28.1%	8.2%	3%	100%	36.7%	16.9%	42.7%	3.7%	100%
Dry kiss	20.2%	74.5%	3.7%	1.5%	100%	25.8%	9.7%	58.4%	6%	100%
Wet kiss	7.9%	88.8%	1.9%	1.5%	100%	17.2%	9.7%	66.3%	6.7%	100%
Petting	1.9%	96.6%	0.4%	1.1%	100%	10.5%	7.5%	74.6%	7.5%	100%
Premarital Intercourse	0.7%	97.8%	0.4%	1.1%	100%	4.5%	2.6%	85.8%	7.1%	100%
Extramarital Intercourse	0.4%	98.1%	0%	1.5%	100%	3%	1.5%	88.7%	6.7%	100%
Masturbation	5.2%	91%	1.9%	1.9%	100%	19.1%	16.1%	55.4%	9.4%	100%
Pomography	3.7%	93.3%	1.9%	1.1%	100%	25.8%	21%	44.9%	8.2%	100%

**Table 4**  
*Masturbation*

	Engaged in the last 12 months	Engaged but not in the last 12 months	Never	Not answering	Total
Male	33.9%	24.8%	29.8%	11.6%	100%
Female	5.1%	9.5%	78.8%	6.6%	100%

**Table 5**  
*Pornography Consumption*

	Engaged in the last 12 months	Engaged but not in the last 12 months	Never	Not answering	Total
Male	40.5%	22.3%	28.9%	8.3%	100%
Female	12.4%	20.4%	59.9%	7.3%	100%

**Table 6**  
*Frequency of Masturbation and Pornography Consumption (Among Those Report Engaged)*

	Frequency					Total
	More than thrice per week	1-3 times per week	1-3 times per month	Less than once a month	Not answering	
Masturbation	5.3%	12.8%	19.1%	34%	28.7%	100%
Pornography consumption	3.2%	7.2%	8.8%	38.4%	42.4%	100%

Table 7  
*Media of Pornography*

Internet	Printed media	VCD/ DVD	Others (e.g. mobile phone)	Internet & VCD/ DVD	Internet and others	Printed media and VCD/ DVD	VCD/ DVD and others	3 media or more	Not answering	Total
44%	2.4%	18.4%	4.8%	8%	0.8%	0.8%	1.6%	2.4%	16.8%	100%

## Discussion

The first part of the finding provides a portrait of church teachings regarding sexuality in Surabaya. Although only six churches participating, the number of people affected by the teachings described in this study exceeds 25,000 people. Excluding Church IV, the teachings related to autonomous, premarital sexual intercourse, and extramarital sexual intercourse is completely conservative and promoting abstinence. Accordingly, Parrinder (as cited in Strong et al., 2005) argues that Abrahamic faiths are relatively conservative toward sexuality. Sexual desire is closely related to human sinful nature. Control is the dominant issue in discussing sexuality. This portrait has also been predicted by Levkowitz et al. (2004) whose study found that Protestants are more conservative than unbelievers.

However, the claim is not without exception. In this study, Church IV is an exception. (The leader of Church IV was lived in Europe for several years and the church is theologically less conservative than other churches involved in this study.) The leader of Church IV asserts:

“I always respect individual choice. Just like what Jesus does. I want my congregants consider the consequences of his/her choice, then make informed decisions. If an engaged couples can manage the health consequences of premarital sexual activity, why should I stop them?” (Leader of Church IV)

All the leaders support their arguments using Bible scriptures. Most of the scriptures do not directly or explicitly point out specific sexual activities. Rather, they focus on the purity and holiness of Christian life. The verse “Thou shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20: 14 [NIV], Elshof, 2003) is the most direct command regarding sexual purity. But the definition of adultery is uncertain. It leaves the reader with questions such: Is masturbation considered adultery? What about premarital sexual intercourse based on mutual agreement and in a committed relationship? Is it considered adultery? The interpretations of this scripture are varied. In another scripture, Jesus defined adultery:

“Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28, NIV version, Elshof, 2003). Quest Study Bible (Elshof, 2003) explains that Jesus was obviously using hyperbole to attract listeners’ attention, because that verse is followed by a suggestion “if your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away.” This hyperbolic definition emphasizes the importance of living a pure sexual life, but does not provide a practical guide in managing sexual drive and negative consequences of sexual activity.

However, the data in this study show that most of the congregants concur with the teachings. More than 90% of the respondents agree that petting, premarital sexual intercourse, extramarital sexual intercourse, masturbation, and pornography consumption are unacceptable. This implies their belief in abstinence approach, i.e. no sex outside marriage. Surprisingly, in a study among Arkansas state legislators, Ramey and Young (2001) found that churchgoers were more likely to oppose abstinence sex education program. They argued that the context of US church teachings regarding sexuality is becoming less and less conservative. Accordingly, Francoeur (2001) provides evidences of incompatibility of conservative religious beliefs regarding sex in American contemporary society, proposing reconsiderations of church teachings in USA. Contrary to that, the condition of churches involved in this study is different. Their teachings are relatively conservative and most of the church members are agreed. However, this agreement does not imply compliance in their behavior. One of the church leaders in this study has accurately predicted:

“Well, I convinced that most of the members of this church agree with the teachings regarding sexuality. I’m sure about that. But the behaviors, I’m really not sure.” (Leader of Church I)

As the leader of Church I has predicted, the finding of this study reveals some discrepancies regarding sexual attitudes and behaviors. In all types of sexual activity, except for kiss on the cheek, the number of respondent who reports “never” is always lower than the number of

respondent who agree that the behavior is “unacceptable”. It means that there are respondents who know that his/her behaviors are unacceptable but still engage in those behaviors. The largest discrepancy is on autonomous sexual activities, i.e. pornography consumption (unacceptable: 93.3%, never: 44.9%) and masturbation (unacceptable: 91%, never: 55.4%).

Inconsistency between attitude and behavior is not a stranger in the psychological research. Wallace, Paulson, Lord, and Bond (2005) meta-analyze 797 studies on the topic of consistency between attitude and behavior. They found that the correlation between attitude and behavior is only 0.41. They conclude that situational constraint also plays important role in weakening that relationship. Ajzen and Fishbein (2005) also point out several factors influencing the relationship between attitude and behavior; such as social context, validity of verbal attitudes measures, vested interest, direct experience with the behavior, self-monitoring tendency, etc.

In religion and sexuality research, this situation can be explained by Rostosky et al. (2004) in her review article. She finds that besides religiosity, social support and social control mechanism are also affecting sexual behaviors. In autonomous sexual activities, both social support and social control are less influential than in other types of sexual activities. Unfortunately, these variables are not asked in the current studies.

The high number of respondents not answering the sexual behavior items is another concern. The mean percentage of respondents not answering sexual behavior items is 6.9%, while the mean percentage of sexual attitude is 1.6%. The highest number of respondents not answering question is masturbation (9.4%) and pornography consumption (8.2%). I hypothesize those numbers due to the hesitation of respondents revealing behaviors which inconsistent with church teachings or with their own attitudes.

However, the percentage of sexual behaviors among church members in this study is still relatively lower than some previous studies in various countries. For instance, the number of premarital sexual intercourse during the last year in this study (4.5%) is lower than in Nigeria (58%) (Nweneka, 2007), in Teheran (28%) (Mohammadi et al., 2006), in Sweden (75%) (Haggstrom-Nordin, Hanson, & Tyden, 2005), and also lower than previous studies in Indonesia (66%, Pisani et al., 2003; 7.2%, Hartono, 2004).

Although many studies prove the failures of abstinence-only approach (Santelli et al., 2006), the abstinence approach adopted by these church is relatively working well on the majority of church

members. As many as 85.8% reports never engage in premarital sexual intercourse. In spite of this finding, small minority of church members who engage in sexual intercourse cannot be neglected. There are 7.5% of respondents who engage in pre- and extramarital sexual intercourse within the last year, and 4.1% engaged but not within the last year. Additional data show that among the respondents who engaged in sexual intercourse, 61.3% use condom or other contraception, but only 29% reports always use condom/other contraception. Santelli et al. (2006) suggest that abstinence approach should not be used alone but combined with other approach to lower the risk of those who fail stay abstaining.

## Conclusion

This study focuses on the sexual teachings, attitudes, and behaviors among Christians in Surabaya. The teachings of the churches and the attitudes of the congregants are mainly conservative, but the behaviors are not always consistent with the teachings. The largest discrepancy belongs to the autonomous sexual activities, i.e. pornography consumption and masturbation. However, 85.8% of the respondents are adopting abstinence approach in their behavior.

The limitation of this study is the low response rate (44.5%). This indicates that a large number of Christians in this study refused to reveal their sexual attitudes and behaviors. I predict their reluctance is due to their less conservative attitudes and behaviors which are not in accordance with the church teachings.

Future studies should focus on how these Christians negotiate the dissonance between sexual attitude and behavior, including the role of sexual knowledge and sex education. Focus-group discussion (FGD) can be used to reveal how church youths comprehend sexual teachings of the church, their own sexual attitudes, and behaviors. The result of the FGD will contribute more information to be included in the questionnaire. More variables can be studied on this issue, such as social support, social control, and religiosity. Similar study can also be conducted in other religious traditions in Indonesia.

It is suggested for church leaders to discuss more openly the challenges church youths are facing in regulating their sexual behavior, in order to better understand the dynamic of church youths' sexual experience. Peer counseling can be an option if the church leaders are perceived authoritative and will



inhibit youths to reveal their personal sexual experience and curiosity. These discussions are suggested to include variables such as sexual knowledge, social support, and situational constraint.

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