

The Role Of Community In Combating The Spread Of Pornography Among Adolescents In Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Addiction to pornography has always been a catalyst of serious social issues in Malaysia and all over the world ever since western countries began legalizing it decades ago. In order to tackle this menace, Wadah Pencerdasan Umat (WADAH) in collaboration with Centre for Community Engagement and Student Movement (COMNET) of Universiti Selangor has initiated a pornography-prevention module titled Sekeluarga Tolak Pornografi (STOP) that aims to tackle the early prevention of pornography, especially among adolescents and children. This module has and will continue to be implemented throughout the community, especially at school. Its concept is based on informative speeches by experts and interactive group activities that are guided by trained facilitators.

Keywords: pornography prevention, sexual awareness, facilitators

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is currently in the throes of a social crisis that is rooted in the advent of technology that makes it easier to disseminate unsavoury and destructive contents such as pornography. Youths and adolescents are the most susceptible segments of Malaysian population to this phenomena which causes some severe problems such as sexual promiscuity, sex outside of wedlock, and unwanted pregnancies, among others.

The availability of such contents will naturally cause some youths to be curious and explore them on their own or with their peers. The effects will be enormous, as documented by numerous studies done throughout the years by countless researchers. Premarital sex is now a common phenomenon in the Western world; and without any efforts by the responsible parties,

Malaysians will be on their way towards following the footsteps of the Westerners, which is a scary proposition indeed. As such, pornography can justly be called the mother of all evils, just like alcohol.

According to Oxford Learner's Dictionary, pornography is defined as "books, magazines, DVDs, etc. that describe or show naked people and sexual acts in order to make people feel sexually excited, especially in a way that many other people find offensive". While many researchers are still not unanimous with regards to whether pornography is ultimately negative, numerous research has pointed out the negative effects of pornography, especially in social and health aspects. The sanctity of marriage institution as well as human dignity is at stake due to pornography.

Consequently, there are some efforts made in order to reverse the impact of pornography. The Malaysian government has initiated some response towards the issue such as blocking pornographic websites on the internet. Other than that, Malaysian Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are also on the frontline of the efforts to eradicate the pornography phenomenon by making efforts to increase people's awareness of the negative aspects of pornography.

Wadah Pencerdasan Umat (WADAH) is one such NGO that has been on the forefront of this battle to save the soul of Malaysians from being consumed further by the pornography menace. Accordingly, WADAH in collaboration with Universiti Selangor's Centre for Community Engagement and Student Movement (COMNET) has created a module called *Sekeluarga Tolak Pornografi (STOP)* in order to disseminate information on pornography use, not only to youths but also to parents. This is because parents are the closest guardians of their children, thus they can actually manage and control the interactions of their children online with appropriate knowledge on how to do it. Many parents are now aware of parental control of their children's use of the internet.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Economic Power of Pornography

Pornography is now one of the biggest money-generating industry in the world. According to a 2007 by TopTenREVIEWS report, pornography generated 97 billion dollars in revenue which is more than the revenues of Netflix, Microsoft, Google, Amazon, eBay and Apple

combined (Ropelato, 2007). Such a startling figure would definitely increase exponentially 13 years ahead of that 2006 report, fuelled by the growth of the internet. According to the same report, it was reported that 28,258 internet users are watching pornography every second while more than 3,000 dollars are being spent every second on pornographic content. There are such huge demands for pornography that in the United States alone, one pornographic video is created every 39 minutes.

The Spread of Pornography Among Muslim Youths

Unsurprisingly, Malaysia and other Muslim countries are not spared from the scourge of pornography. While the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission has banned 3,781 pornographic websites since 2014, Malaysians can easily watch and download pornography through technologies that can work around the censorship (Shah, 2018).

According to a study by Jafarkarimi, Sim, Saadatdost, & Hee (2015), 14% of Muslims surveyed admitted that they frequently watched pornography while youngsters between the age of 20 and 22 are the most susceptible to this phenomena. This problem is not limited to youths in this age bracket. Adolescents younger than 20 years old, and those above 22 years old are also widely affected. Overall, 84% of men and 69% of women reported that they were exposed to one or more mode of pornography at least once in their lifetime with the majority of them being first exposed to it before the age of 21 (Wilson & Abelson, 1973).

The Negative Effects of Pornography on Individuals and Society

Adding insult to injury, a research by Rahman, et al. (2015) concluded that increasing number of young adolescents are having permissive attitudes towards sexual activity due to widespread use of pornography. This in turn causes the increase in prevalence of premarital sexual activities among Malaysians. The severe harm caused by premarital sex is widely known in Malaysia. In 2014 alone, 16,528 cases of babies born out of wedlock were recorded by Malaysian Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (LPPKN, 2015). To make matters worse, 3,980 of those cases involve mothers between the age of 10 and 19. Such a worrying development could cause severe health and mental distress to the mothers and their babies due to the stigma associated with unwanted pregnancies and premarital sex in Malaysia. The social effects of pornography that causes premarital sex cannot be neglected.

Pornography was also reported to cause changes in hedonic reactions particularly among men (Zillmann & Bryant, Effects of Massive Exposure to Pornography, 1984). It was reported that

sexual callousness toward women are on the rise, as women are objectified in pornography. Sexual actions that are supposed to be intimate in nature are now consumed massively and remotely, while the “actors” on screen are only viewed as objects to satisfy the consumers’ lust.

Objectification of women in pornography can also cause other damaging effects especially sexual aggression towards women. Other research concluded that frequent use of pornography is linked to sexually aggressive behaviours due to the consumption of violent pornography (Malamuth, Addison, & Koss, 2000). Rape and other coercive behaviours can be seen as “normal” by the consumers of these explicitly aggressive pornographic contents. The depiction of violence in pornography “generates more aggression”, continuing the cycle of aggression towards women that the world has tried to eradicate (Allen, D'Alessio, & Brezgel, 1995).

A conclusive and holistic research has been made by Paolucci, Genuis and Violato (1997) in which four main assertions of negative effects of pornography were concluded through meta-analysis of 46 published studies on pornography. The researchers noted that pornography causes sexual deviancy, increase in sexual perpetration, negative intimate relationships and increase in believing in the rape myth for persons exposed to pornographic materials. Mass exposure towards pornography encourages people to experiment with sex (especially sex out of wedlock), while causing difficulty in creating stable intimate relationships with consensual partners due to their sexual deviancy. The person viewing pornographic contents may see the acts performed by the actors as “normal” even though they may not be socially acceptable. The abnormal acts will be imitated in real life, thus developing sexually deviant tendencies among pornography consumers.

Individuals are not the only ones affected by this phenomena. The institution of marriage is also widely and negatively affected by the scourge of pornography. A research by Zillmann and Bryant (1988) reported that people who are exposed to pornography have greater acceptance of pre- and extramarital sex. This induced the belief that “male and female promiscuity are natural” and marriage as an institution is “less significant”. This research reinforced the belief that sacred family values are being attacked and eroded by pornography. The effects can be seen in most Western countries in which premarital sex is regarded as absolutely normal, marriage is unnecessary while diminishing the desire to produce children. As a result, the fertility rate in Western countries has also reduced to a level that has not been seen before in the history of mankind (Roser, 2014).

On a more personal level, pornography is also said to cause severe health problems related to Porn-induced Erectile Dysfunction or better known as PIED (Park, et al., 2016). The unique characteristics of internet pornography may cause sexual arousal “that do not readily transition” to intimate partners in real life. Intimate acts with legitimate partners may not conform to the “reality” that the pornography consumers wanted and in turn causes the decline in arousal. This causes erectile dysfunction in a person who are exposed to pornography.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is a secondary research through the analysis of research papers as well as anti-pornography module created by *WADAH Pencerdasan Umat* (WADAH) in conjunction with Universiti Selangor’s Centre for Community Engagement and Student Movement (COMNET) which is titled *Sekeluarga Tolak Pornografi* (STOP).

DISCUSSION

Sex education in school, the involvement of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), media and Islamic-based sexual education.

RESEARCH ANALYSIS (OBSERVATION OF STOP MODULES)

Children are born curious. Curiosity is an ingrained characteristic of a child that helps them to learn, absorb and explore new knowledge regarding the world. It drives them forward, learning new things that will be invaluable for them in the future. Thus, it is natural for children to be curious about sexual matters, especially once they have reached puberty.

However, many Malaysian children and adolescents do not have the necessary channel to learn and enquire about sex. In fact, sex education is still a taboo subject in Malaysia. It is a subject that has only been explored in several years and has not been implemented widely, especially in rural areas. As a result, they will satisfy their curiosity through other means, such as viewing online pornography.

Thus, it is highly important that these children receive proper Islamic-based sex education that can fulfil their need to know while protecting their dignity as a sacred being created by Allah

SWT. *Wadah Pencerdasan Umat* (WADAH) is one of Islamic Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) that focuses on *da'wah* and social issues that are affecting the lives of Malaysians. As such, an Islamic-based sex education module called “Sekeluarga Tolak Pornografi” (STOP) has been developed by WADAH in order to propagate an appropriate response on pornography-viewing among children and adolescents.

STOP has been implemented in numerous schools throughout Malaysia for over 3 years. It is aimed at diverse audiences including schoolchildren, schoolteachers and parents. Its stated aim is to enlighten the society to the dangers of pornography as well as the importance of monitoring and managing family members. STOP has two main chapters to be presented, which are “the dangers of pornography” and “managing oneself and family members”. Most STOP seminars were organised at schools nationwide, while several bigger conventions on STOP involving experts has also been organised to wider audiences.

The first chapter touched on the adverse effects of pornography to society especially the youngsters. The STOP trainers will present research evidences with regards to the scourge of pornography. The audiences are enlightened on the adverse impacts of pornography on youths’ outlooks towards sex. Most youngsters who are addicted to pornography readily admit that illicit sex is sinful but they still have permissive attitude towards sex as a whole. The exposure towards pornography will also pique the youngsters’ curiosity and desire to emulate the same actions that they watched to their real life situations. The statistics regarding the number of babies born outside of wedlock and baby dumping are also presented by the trainers, together with the graphic evidences of such crimes also featured in the presentations. The aim is to imprint the immensely negative social effects of pornography on the mind of audiences.

Meanwhile, the second part of STOP module involves the tips given by experts on how to manage oneself and family members in the face of the onslaught of pornography on our family values. Parents are advised to monitor the online usage of their children, especially the adolescents as they are the most vulnerable to be lured by curiosity on pornography. The seemingly innocuous websites and applications such as YouTube and Netflix can also contain pornographic materials unsuitable for underage students. The school-going children are also advised on ways to manage their online interactions in order to navigate themselves freely from pornography in the internet.

CONCLUSION

Based on this literature review and analysis, we conclude that pornography is a terrible menace to the society and should be eradicated with utmost urgency. The societal impacts caused by pornography are huge, namely increase in permissive attitudes toward premarital sex, sexual callousness and objectification of women, increase in aggressive behaviours toward women, sexual deviancy, negative intimate relationships and the erosion of family values. On a more personal level, pornography is associated with Erectile Dysfunction that primarily affects men, which is a difficult health issue to tackle.

Due to destructive nature of pornography to humans, it is no wonder that Allah has commanded humans to severely punish those who performed sexual acts in front of 4 person as mentioned in Surah An-Nur, verse number 2:

“The [unmarried] woman or [unmarried] man found guilty of sexual intercourse - lash each one of them with a hundred lashes, and do not be taken by pity for them in the religion of Allah, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. And let a group of the believers witness their punishment.”

Nevertheless, as the source of pornography is the Western countries beyond the reach of Islamic law, we need to give our best in preventing the spread of pornography to our youths. Even as the Malaysian government has introduced censorship on pornographic websites, many Malaysians can easily access them through technologies created to circumvent internet firewalls. As such, anti-pornography modules are necessary addition to other efforts to combat the scourge of pornography.

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