

Response of sexuality education in schools  
to adolescents' exposure to sexually explicit  
online materials: Focus groups with  
students, parents, and teachers

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# Sexually Explicit Online Materials

- Sexually explicit online materials (SEOM) refer broadly to any erotic materials or messages—textual, visual, or aural—distributed via the Internet that are intended to stimulate sexual responses in users (Lo & Wei, 2005; Peter & Valkenburg, 2006; Thornburgh & Lin, 2002; To et al., 2012).

# Sexually Explicit Online Materials

Scale	SEOM Viewers <i>M (SD)</i>	SEOM Non-viewers <i>M (SD)</i>	Statistical Comparison	$\eta^2$
<b>Beliefs in Sexual Coercion</b>				
Sexual	41.02 (8.52)	37.50 (7.00)	$F(1,425) = 12.36^{***}$	.03
Sexual	15.86 (4.84)	13.27 (4.15)	$F(1,435) = 19.01^{***}$	.04
<b>Compulsivity</b>				
Sexual	20.11 (7.33)	16.03 (4.78)	$F(1,438) = 31.63^{***}$	.07
<b>Daydreaming</b>				

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# Sexually Explicit Online Materials

Predictors	Equation 1 (criterion: Intrapersonal)	Equation 2 (criterion: Beliefs in Sexual Coercion)	Equation 5 (criterion: Sexual Compulsivity)	Equation 6 (criterion: Sexual Daydreaming)
<i>b (SE)</i>		<i>b (SE)</i>	<i>b (SE)</i>	<i>b (SE)</i>
Adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		Adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>
Frequency	2.77 (.53) .32***	1.93 (.45) .11***	.46 (.26) .11***	1.74 (.38) .16***
Intrapersonal		.18 (.06) .14***	.23 (.03) .30***	.42 (.04) .45***

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# Sexually Explicit Online Materials

- Jochen Peter & Patti M. Valkenburg (2016):  
Adolescents and Pornography: A Review of 20  
Years of Research, *The Journal of Sex Research*, DOI:  
10.1080/00224499.2016.1143441

# Sexuality Education

- Sexuality education for adolescents in Hong Kong was first introduced in the 1960s as an experimental project carried out by a few voluntary services.
- The Education Department published its first curriculum outline for sex education in 1971 and promulgated its first guidelines in 1986.

# Sexuality Education

- In response to the growing demands for sex education in schools, the Education Department revised its guidelines in 1997, with the aim of assisting “all schools to develop sex education policies and programs whose content and approaches are clear to all parties concerned” (Education Department, 1997, p.3).

# Sexuality Education

- The rapid development of information technology has paved the way for adolescents to access different kinds of information and explore their own meaning of sexuality.
- It is questionable if the sexuality education delivered in traditional ways is compatible with such tremendous changes in SEOM exposure.



# Objectives of the Study

- To understand adolescents' subjective experiences and personal accounts of the meaning of viewing SEOM;
- To explore the perceptions and suggestions of parents and teachers regarding adolescents' exposure to SEOM because they are often considered as the primary influence on adolescents' values and attitudes about sex.

# Methods

- Four focus group sessions were conducted respectively for 14 male and 12 female adolescents who were studying Form 4 and 5 at the time of data collection.
- They were recruited by a purposive sampling method from two secondary schools. The selection criteria included their age, socio-economic status, educational levels, and the bandings of schools.

# Methods

- Two focus group sessions were organized for 7 parents and 7 teachers.
- The research participants were selected according to their age, gender, teaching experience and the bandings of schools they served.

# Interview Guide

- How do you view Hong Kong adolescents' exposure to SEOM?
- Have any peers shared with you their experiences of accessing SEOM?
- Do you have any experience with accessing SEOM?
- Do you think that accessing SEOM is a problem among Hong Kong adolescents?
- Do adolescents who access SEOM differ from other young people who do not?
- In your views, in what ways does exposure to SEOM affect Hong Kong adolescents?
- Do you have any recommendations on the policy formulation, intervention and education regarding adolescent exposure to SEOM?

# Data Analysis

- The method of interpretive phenomenological analysis was adopted for examining the qualitative data (To & Chu, 2009).
- The researchers identified the themes by comparing and categorizing the meaning units derived from the data.
- The researchers listed the themes and made sense of the connections that were emerging between themes. They examined whether the connections between themes identified in the transcripts reflected the direct experiences of the participants. Finally, major themes underlying the participants' lived experiences were summarized, together with quotations that best illustrate the themes.

# Adolescents' Focus Groups

- Prevalence and patterns of accessing SEOM
- Students revealed that adolescents would view SEOM quite frequently. Adolescents would surf for SEOM when they were free or felt boring. Some would watch SEOM daily.
- In their opinions, for adolescents who viewed SEOM daily would be regarded as excessive. (All respondents of school WYM).

# Adolescents' Focus Groups

- Prevalence and patterns of accessing SEOM
- Some students regarded that frequency was a comparative term. For a person who used to accessing SEOM 24 hours per day, a 2 hours' website surfing would not be frequent then.
- Some expressed that for adolescents who had the ability for proper self control, accessing SEOM would not have great impact on them as they believed that they were able to be self-disciplined.
- Some students frankly shared that they had struggles on the SEOM issue. To view SEOM would cause guilt feeling, especially some of them had religious belief.

# Parents' Focus Group

- Prevalence and patterns of accessing SEOM
- Parents of the focus group generally agreed that adolescents of Hong Kong were prevalent in viewing SEOM.
- They regarded that even young females were quite active in reading SEOM. They were interested to read online homosexual story (BL) scripts from the internet.



# Parents' Focus Group

- Prevalence and patterns of accessing SEOM
- Concerning the attitude of the parents towards their adolescent children to view SEOM, divergence was found in their acceptance towards this issue. Some of the group members thought it was acceptable, but some found it inappropriate.

# Teachers' Focus Group

- Prevalence and patterns of accessing SEOM
- The teachers were impressed that the adolescents were very resourceful in finding information from SEOM. They regarded the prevalence of access to SEOM as strong. They thought that it was common for teenager of 12 to 14 having experiences in accessing SEOM. They liked sharing the information got from SEOM among the peers . In their view, this behavioral pattern became a norm.

# Teachers' Focus Group

- Prevalence and patterns of accessing SEOM
- Teachers' opinions towards adolescents' behavior in accessing SEOM were divergent.
- Some of them were liberal in attitude. They regarded that the adolescents in viewing SEOM was not a problem. On the contrary, adults' oppressive behavior to their behavior was a problem. They regarded that the adolescents would tend to be rebellious if they felt being compelled. They regarded that the tendency of adolescents reading SEOM was out of curiosity. Curiosity was not a problem. Only if the adolescents developed addictive behavior would become a problem.

# Adolescents' Focus Groups

- Views on sexuality education in school
- Students regarded the existing sex education as inadequate. Even if they had attended the sex education programs at schools. It seemed that the programs were not impressive to them.
- In their view, the presence of the teachers in the sex education programs would restrain them from active participation. They felt embarrassed to react openly in public as they were afraid that they would be misunderstood as disgusting sex pursers.

# Adolescents' Focus Groups

- Views on sexuality education in school
- They had reservation towards the current sexuality education practices by the practitioners or the sexuality educators. The contents of the existing sexuality education programs were rather dogmatic and conservative.
- In addition, the students considered that more sex education might be needed by parents as usually, parents were shy and embarrassed to discuss topics of sex with their children.

# Adolescents' Focus Groups

- In the opinions of students, sex was a social taboo that the schools and the teachers would escape from discussing it openly. The teachers might pretended to be open in discussing this topic. However, actually, they were conservative. What had been done in sex education was only all the superficial stuff.

# Parents' Focus Group

- Views on sexuality education in school
- One parent found that opportunities to teach sexuality education in formal education context at his school was inadequate. There was no formal lessons on sex education. Even related content on sex was being touched on, the teaching materials were taught in lessons of moral education or religious education. In addition, he was not sure the attitude of the school's administrators towards sexuality education to the students. School-based sexuality education curriculum was not set up.

# Parents' Focus Group

- Views on sexuality education in school
- The parents addressed the importance of parents' active involvement and coaching in helping the adolescents to develop proper and healthy attitude towards sexuality.
- They also held that the parents themselves should know their own values towards sexuality, clarify myths and ambivalence, be clear and positive in their ways to cope with issues arouse from sexuality. In the opinions of the parents, being able to keep positive dialogue with the adolescents was important. These were all the challenges faced by the parents in handling their adolescent children's sexuality problems.



# Parents' Focus Group

- Views on sexuality education in school
- For the content of sexuality education, parents opined to share all the topics in an open manner. They preferred the adults to discuss more with the youth by playing the role as facilitators.
- Freedom should also be rendered to the sexuality educators to share core values and practical issues of sexual concerns with the youth.

# Teachers' Focus Group

- Difficulties and challenges faced by teachers
- According to the sharing of the teachers, they did encounter certain difficulties. Some felt embarrassed to handle cases with nature of sexuality due to gender concern.
- Some regarded that it might be inappropriate for teachers to handle cases of sexuality with students of opposite sex. Some feared the problem of work overload that would exceed their capacity to cope. Some further mentioned the role conflicts of being a teacher as well as a counselor in handling difficult cases.

# Teachers' Focus Group

- Views on sexuality education in school
- Some teachers pointed out the inadequacy of current sex education and practice. They highlighted the following:
  - Formal sex education for the adolescents was very inadequate.
  - Current sex education focused too much on biological aspect, but neglect the pragmatic requirement from the adolescents.
  - Incorrect information were sent to the adolescents through mass media.

# Teachers' Focus Group

- Issue based sex education – Topics of current issues on sexuality would be chosen for discussion and sharing with the students. Some teachers further recommended more macro discussion on sexuality issues, like sexuality, gender and interpersonal relationship.

# Teachers' Focus Group

- Group work practice – group work practice were recommended for sexuality education programs.
- Suitable personnel to launch sexuality education – TF03 recommended to select the right person to teach specialized topics on sex.
- Clear goals, positioning and focus - The key questions of 'Ws' – What to teach, who to teach ... are regarded as important. Some teachers regarded that the personal values of the teachers whom involved in sex education should be clear. The focus of education on sexuality should be compromised among the involved teachers .

# Teachers' Focus Group

- Some teachers mentioned that genuine support & formation of school policy from the school administrators were important.
- Professional and personal preparation for sex education by the teachers were requisite for successful implementation of sexuality education.

# Discussion

- How do you perceive the provision of sexuality education in Hong Kong? Do you think a review of the guidelines on sexuality education and its implementation is needed?
- How do you perceive the current modes of sexuality education in schools? Are there any service gaps?

# Discussion

- How can we deal with the difficulties and challenges in the implementation of sexuality education in schools?
- How can we encourage young people to voice their needs and views on sexuality education?



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