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# Psychological Education and Legal Policy for Child Victims of Pornographic Content on Social Media

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## **Abstract**

Pornographic content is harmful to children's psychological and mental development. In Indonesia, many children are involved in activities and access pornographic content through social media. In some cases, children exposed to pornography will experience a decrease in IQ and mental disorders in terms of sexuality. This type of research is descriptive-qualitative identifying, explaining, and analysing a phenomenon based on variables and primary and secondary data. The purpose of this research is to find out the impact of pornographic content on social media for children's psychology and how the Indonesian government's policy addresses the problem. The results of this study show that the psychological impact of child victims of pornography include: anxiety and stress disorders, sexual perception deviations, identity and body image disorders, decreased social interaction skills, difficulty concentrating on learning and poor self-image. The Indonesian government's policy to protect children from pornography is carried out through penal means using criminal law enforcement instruments, as well as non-penal means, namely cooperation between countries and global child protection organisations, blocking content, and educating understanding of using a healthy internet.

Keywords: Pornography, Children, Social Media, Psychology, Legal Policy.

The development of information technology has a huge influence on the progress of human civilization, but the digital world can also have a negative impact, especially on children. The results of a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) study in 2021 stated that as many as 92% of children aged 12-17 years are active

internet users. This condition can cause problems if the children use the internet freely without supervision from parents, because of the potential for internet abuse, especially accessing pornographic content.

For children, pornographic content will hurt their psychological and mental development.

Experts argue that pornography causes distortion of children's perception of social reality or excessive conditions of sexual behavior in general (Wood, 2013). Even in some cases children who often see pornography will experience mental disorders in terms of sexuality (Rahmania & Haryanto, 2017). Based on the 2021 Report of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection of the Republic of Indonesia, 66.6% of boys and 62.3% of girls in Indonesia watch sexual activities (pornography) through online media. The data also revealed that 34.5% of boys and 25% of girls had engaged in pornography or practiced direct sexual activity. In addition, as many as 38.2% of boys and 39% of girls have sent photos of sexual activities through social media (antaranews.com).

The data above shows that many children in Indonesia are victims of pornography and in the long run pornography can threaten the future of children. This certainly should not be left alone (Quayle, 2022). Pornography addiction is as dangerous as drug addiction because it equally damages the child's prefrontal cortex (PFC) brain (Cohen et al., 2022). Pornography is also often called narcolema, which is narcotics through the eyes. San Antonio Hospital Neurosurgeon Donald L. Hilton asserts brain damage due to pornography addiction is more severe than other addictions. Pornography addiction affects the sublime functioning of the brain, also stimulating the body, physically, and emotionally followed by sexual behavior (Lase & Halawa, 2022).

Children who are exposed to pornography, to overcome their curiosity, will imitate or try to do sexual acts seen on social media, the impact will be worse if done by children who are teenagers. If not properly supervised and educated, then the desire to imitate sexual acts will be very difficult to prevent (Seto et al., 2012).

Lack of sexual education of children leads to behavioral deviations. Sarlito W. Sarwono stated sexual education is information about the issue of human sexuality that is clear and correct, including the process of conception, pregnancy to birth sexual behavior, sexual relations, aspects of health, psychology, and society (Hariyani et al., 2012). The current era of globalization allows children to access pornographic content very easily thanks to the help of the internet and smartphones. In addition, children's social media activities are often done alone without someone else supervising, so they can access anything freely (Agarwal & Singhal, 2017).

Exposure to pornography in children and adolescents raises concerns because it has a very bad impact on their development, such as sexual activity at an early age, the emergence of sexual abuse and/or violence, to rape (Schuler et al., 2021). This condition is certainly very worrying considering that children are the future successors of the nation who must be protected from various negative things. Because the government together with other related parties must make effective policies in protecting children from exposure to pornography (Meserve & Pemstein, 2020).

Sudarsono stated that technological developments have contributed to the occurrence of deviant behavior or delinquency in children. If parents rarely supervise their children, lack support, and apply discipline patterns ineffectively, it will cause deviations in children's behavior (Utomo & Sa'i, 2018). Parents must be proactive in supervising and accompanying children, especially in using the internet.

#### Method

In accordance with the main problem, this research design uses descriptive-qualitative methods (Grigorovich et al., 2023). Descriptive is a problem formulation that guides research to explore social phenomena that will be studied in depth. Taylor-Bogdan (del Valle et al., 2022) state that the qualitative approach focuses on social phenomena, voting, and perception of the object under study. This study aims to identify, explain, and analyze pornography addiction in adolescents. Data analysis is the stage of data

collection using observation methods, psychological intelligence or intelligence tests, data reduction or (simplification), data presentation, and inference (verification), depending on the needs of interactive method models (Saputra & Movitaria, 2022).

Data collection techniques in this study were carried out by interviews with experts in their fields (legal experts and psychologists), observation, and document studies (library research). The source of research data consists of primary materials: namely child protection laws, electronic information and transaction laws, pornography laws, and other related legal regulations. Skunder material consists of expert opinions, journals, or scientific papers that discussed the psychological impact of pornography on children in previous studies.

Sampling techniques are carried out through probability sampling, which is a method of selecting samples from a population using probability rules where each element or element of sampling is given the same opportunity to be included/selected in the sample. Furthermore, structured random sampling is carried out by dividing population members into several subgroups (strata), and then selecting samples from each stratum.

## **Results And Discussion**

The Psychological Impact of Child Victims of Pornography on Social Media

Understanding children's psychological patterns will help parents establish relationships or communicate, teach children to apply coping mechanisms in emotional management, and facilitate children's growth at every stage of psychological development (Jones, 2013). With an understanding of child psychology, parents and teachers can also detect problems related to learning, and hyperactivity, or teach children to deal with anxiety (Vanderburg et al., 2023), caused by childhood trauma (W. Guo et al., 2023).

Social scientists, clinical psychologists, and biologists expose the various social and psychological effects of pornography, and neuroscientists also describe the biological mechanisms by which pornography produces powerful biological effects on individuals. In general, the effects of pornography can weaken individual and social functioning, including (Fagan, 2009):

- a) Effects on Mind: Pornography significantly distorts attitudes and perceptions about the nature of sexual intercourse. Men who commonly view pornography have a higher tolerance for sexual intercourse, sexual aggression, promiscuity, and even rape. In addition, men began to see women and even children as sex objects, commodities, or instruments for pleasure;
- b) Effects on the Body: Pornography is highly addictive. The addictive aspect of pornography is related to biological reactions in the body, where the hormone dopamine is produced and acts as one of the mechanisms to form transmission pathways to the pleasure centers of the brain. So, the increase in perceptions about the permissibility of sexual intercourse due to exposure to pornography causes an increased risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases or the existence of pregnancy outside marriage so that children become parents too early;
- c) Effects on the Heart: Pornography affects people's emotional lives. Married men exposed to pornography are less satisfied with their husbands' sexual relationships and less attached. Women married to men addicted to pornography reported frequent acts of treason, betrayal of trust, and irritability. Exposure to pornography is thought to lead to infidelity and even divorce. Teenagers who view pornography will feel ashamed, lack confidence, and feel distrust in sexual activities (Fagan, 2009)

Psychological disorders (Filippo et al., 2012) that can occur in children include pervasive developmental disorders, mental retardation disorders, bipolar, elimination, to learning

disorders. In understanding child psychology, parents need to understand all the conditions that children are living to create a harmonious relationship (Burns et al., 2021).

Countermeasures for the impact of pornography on children

The impact of exposure to pornography is a change in behavior and mindset in exposed individuals. Exposure to pornography in adolescents can lead to unhealthy sexual activity, such as viewing obscene books or movies, kissing, dating, and so on. In addition, exposure to pornography can also interfere with students' interest in learning and affect cognitive development, including thinking and memory skills (Silalahi & Safitri, 2021).

Based on research conducted by the Education and Culture Policy Research Center Team, Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, on 1340 junior and senior high school students in the Jakarta and Banten areas, 97% of adolescents claimed to have watched or accessed pornographic material, while 93% of respondents claimed to have had a kissing experience, and 62.7% had been involved in sexual relations.

The majority of students who were respondents said they enjoyed engaging in repetitive activities because they sparked curiosity and created pleasant sensations. Watching pornographic content triggers students to engage in similar activities, even if they have never done so. Behaviors resulting from watching pornography by students include simple kissing (on the cheek), french kissing, and touching each other's body and genitals, although still within the confines of clothing (Diana, 2018).

Students who have been exposed to pornography experience changes in sexual behavior that can have an impact on decreased learning productivity. Some changes in sexual behavior that occur include: (Caltabiano et al., 2020):

a. Imagining or fantasizing about the content of the video;

- b. Mimic behavior or scenes depicted in videos:
- c. Touching sensitive parts of the opposite sex, such as the chest or thighs;
- d. Masturbate, either with or without ejaculation.

These behavioral changes can affect a child's ability to focus and concentrate on their studies, as their thoughts and actions may be preoccupied with sexual thoughts or behaviors. It can also lead to decreased academic performance and a decrease in their overall learning outcomes. In the context of math learning, exposure to pornography can cause students to lack focus and negatively impact learning scores (Silalahi & Safitri, 2021).

Sudarsono stated that children's understanding and knowledge of sexual problems have grown in life in the family environment. But often children still do not understand and are embarrassed to talk about this problem to their parents, so children choose to look for information from other sources or internet media (social media). Pornography hurts the psychological and mental development of children, including:

- a) Anxiety and stress disorders: Exposure to pornographic content makes children feel anxious, stressed, or surprised. Children do not have good insight or understanding of pornographic content which can cause confusion and emotional turmoil (Schuler et al., 2021);
- b) Deviation of sexual perception. Children who are exposed to pornography result in distorted perceptions of sexuality. This can trigger the child to develop unrealistic or unhealthy expectations about sex that can affect their sexual development later in life (Wood, 2013);
- c) Identity and body image disorders. Pornographic content can also affect a child's body image and identity development. Children will begin to imitate and apply the body standards or appearance they see in pornographic content in their daily lives (McKee, 2010);

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- d) Disorders of sexual behavior. In some cases, children who are victims of pornographic content for a long time will experience sexual behavior disorders. Children can trigger unhealthy interests or disorientation of sexuality that imprint on their minds, thus triggering deviant sexual behavior as children grow older (Konrad et al., 2018);
- e) Decreased ability of social interaction: Children who frequently view pornographic content will experience a decline in social skills and interaction because they see human relationships only from a sexual point of view (Knack et al., 2020);
- f) Causes difficulty concentrating on learning, up to a decrease in IQ. Addiction to pornographic content can cause children to have difficulty concentrating on learning and activities. This is due to the effects of anxiety and decreased productivity due to reduced social interaction of children. This condition will continuously result in a decrease in children's ability to learn and gain knowledge (Ali et al., 2023);
- g) Poor self-concept and self-image. Children who are victims of pornography tend to have poor self-concept and self-image. In men and women, both will have insecurity in themselves (Döring, 2014).

For children, pornography is a sexual sensation that is received prematurely, so what happens is the imprint of a deep impression under the conscious brain that makes it difficult for them to concentrate, not focused, lazy to learn, not passionate about doing activities, to experience shock and disorientation (loss of sight) of their identity (Hornor, 2020). One study found that exposure to pornography can cause Problem Sexualized Behaviors (PSB) in children under the age of 12. PSB involves sexual knowledge beyond what is expected for a child's age and developmental level. Exposure to pornography at a young age not only introduces children to sexual behavior but also reinforces this behavior, leading to an increased risk of engaging in PSB (Rostad, 2019).

In terms of academic achievement, exposure to pornography can have a negative effect on concentration and learning. A study conducted on Indonesian students found that exposure to pornography makes it difficult for students to concentrate on their studies, resulting in lower academic achievement (Hariyani et al., 2012). It is important to note that more research is needed to fully understand the impact of pornography exposure on the psychological development and academic achievement of primary school children. The limited research available suggests that exposure to pornography can have negative effects on both aspects of a child's life (Hariyani et al., 2012).

It is important to note that the impact of pornography on child psychology can vary depending on the child's age, level of exposure, and context. Parents and caregivers have an important role to play in protecting children from inappropriate exposure to pornography. They can do the following:

- a) Monitor internet access: Restrict children's access to the internet and install age-appropriate content filters. Monitor children's online activities and identify signs of inappropriate exposure (Lee et al., 2005);
- b) Healthy sex education: Talk to children about sexuality and healthy relationships appropriate to their age (Neufeld et al., 2002);
- c) Open communication: Opening channels of communication with children so that they feel comfortable asking questions about things they see or hear (Cmurová & Záhorcová, 2023);
- d) Choose the right content: Choose ageappropriate media content and explore content filter options on devices and platforms used by your child (Hoffman et al., 2015);

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), millions of girls and boys around the world face sexual abuse and exploitation every year. Sexual violence occurs in every country regardless of group and stratum of society (Maity & Chakraborty, 2023). Children can be victims of abuse or social

exploitation, even in the immediate environment such as home, school, and community. UNICEF research, Disrupting Harm (2022) revealed that in 2021 nearly half a million children in Indonesia stated that they had been victims of sexual violence and exploitation. Children said they had been subjected to blackmail to force their involvement in sexual activity or sextortion, dissemination of their sexual images without permission, or forced into sexual activity in the lure of money or gifts (Howard Taylor, 2022).

Table I. Child Complaints Related to Pornography and Cybercrime 2020

Type	amount
Possession of child pornography	348
Child victims of online sex crimes	89
Child victims of social media	44
pornography	
Child victims of bullying on social	33
media	
Child bullying on social media	8
Online sex offenders involving children	4
A total of 526 complaints	

Source: Indonesian Child Protection

## Commission (KPAI)

Based on the presentation of the data above, it shows that pornography among Indonesian children is very worrying, therefore clear and firm legal regulations are needed to crack down on cyber porn perpetrators while preventing children from being exposed to porn. The crime of decency is an act committed by everyone where the act is considered to violate the norms of decency, such as the dissemination of pornographic content on social media or public performances that are contrary to the norms of decency. Decency offenses are offenses related to moral issues, but it is not easy to set the limits or scope of decency offenses because the definition of decency is very broad according to views and values in society (Lestari, 2019).

Legal policies protecting children from pornography on social media are generally part of a broader effort to regulate and control content. In addition, education or understanding must also be given by teachers in schools about the dangers of pornographic content on the psychological and mental development of children (Moon et al., 2022).

Cyber porn is the act of anyone who deliberately uses cyberspace to display, distribute, and publish content in the form of writing, images, and sounds that contain pornography and or contrary to decency (Salsabilla & Mahyani, 2022).

Indonesia already has legal rules regarding pornography, especially on social media including:

1) Articles 29 to Article 41 of Law Number: 44 of 2008 concerning Pornography;

Regulate sanctions for anyone (person or legal entity) who produces, creates, stores, downloads, facilitates, and provides pornographic services with a maximum prison sentence of 12 years and a maximum fine of Rp. 6,000,000,000 (six billion rupiah).

2) Article 27 Paragraph (1) and Article 45 of Law Number: 19 of 2016 concerning Information and Electronic Transactions (ITE Law):

Everyone intentionally and without having the right to distribute, transmit or make accessible information and electronic documents that have the content of violating decency jo Article 45 of the ITE Law Everyone who has fulfilled the elements as referred to in the provisions of Article 27 Paragraph (1), Paragraph (2), Paragraph (3), or Paragraph (4) may be sentenced to a maximum of 6 years imprisonment and a maximum fine of Rp. 1,000,000,000,000 (one billion rupiah).

3) Article 67 A of Law 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection;

Everyone must protect children from the influence of pornography and prevent children's access to information containing pornographic elements. jo Article 67 B Paragraph (1) special protection for children who are victims of pornography is implemented through efforts to foster, mentor, and social recovery, and physical and mental health.

4) Article 282 Paragraph (1) and Paragraph (2) of the Criminal Code;

Threatened with imprisonment for a maximum of 1 year 4 months and or a maximum fine of Rp.45,000 whoever broadcasts, displays or pastes blatantly a writing known to its contents, or an image or item known to him that violates the feeling of decency, or makes, brings in, sends directly, brings out or makes available such writing, picture or item for broadcast, be displayed or pasted so that it is visible to the public, or overtly or by broadcasting a letter, or by openly soliciting or showing that the writing, picture or thing may be obtained, if there is reasonable reason to suspect, that the writing of the picture or item violates the feeling of decency.

Panel of Judges in Criminal Case Decision No.2191/Pid.B/2014/PN. Sby, about the crime of decency on social media, expressed his opinion on violating decency, namely:

- a) acts committed by any person where the act is considered to have violated norms related to decency;
- b) dissemination of content using several media either communication or performances displayed in public;
- c) The definition of violating decency refers to the limitation of the object of pornography in the Pornography Law.

In addition, Indonesia has activated the provisions of the Optional Protocol To The Convention On The Rights Of The Child On The Sale Of Children, Child Prostitution, And Child Pornography in Law Number: 10 of 2012 concerning the Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child Regarding the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography. It is hoped that this legal regulation on pornography or criminal acts of decency can take action and provide a deterrent effect to perpetrators, to prevent and keep children away from social media pornographic content (Slane, 2015).

The legal policy of protecting children from exposure to pornography in Indonesia relies on

the enforcement of criminal law based on the provisions of the legislation described above. The existence of criminal sanctions with the threat of imprisonment and fines is expected to have a deterrent effect on perpetrators of cybercrimes, especially pornography. In addition to law enforcement, efforts to protect children from pornographic content are also carried out through penal and non-penal approaches, in accordance with the theory of coping policies to achieve justice, certainty, and expediency of law.

Legal policies in overcoming the problem of children who are victims of social media pornography are generally divided into penal and non-penal. The penal policy is an effort to use criminal law enforcement means such as the Law, the ITE Law, the Criminal Code, and the Child Protection Law as described above. Meanwhile, non-penal policies are carried out with cultural, cultural, or educational approaches as a preventive effort by carrying out a series of strengthening programs, instilling noble ethical values, and social ethics, and strengthening beliefs in religion (Abdullah, 2017).

Non-penal policy objectives for the realization of prosperity. Non-penal policies exist to protect the interests of perpetrators, and victims and build a materially and immaterially healthy social environment from criminogenic factors (Wulandari, 2020). Legal policies that can be used to protect children from pornography on social media include:

- 1) Age verification: Many countries impose age-verification requirements on social media to ensure that children under a certain age cannot access content that is not appropriate for them. This may include restrictions on adult content that can only be accessed by users who have verified their age (Sharpe & Mead, 2021);
- 2) Report and block content: Social media often have reporting mechanisms that allow users to report inappropriate or illegal content. The law may require platforms to respond to such reports and take appropriate action, such as removing content or reporting it to authorities. In

Indonesia, this policy is known as a healthy internet (Trong et al., 2022);

- 3) Compliance with international child protection standards: Many countries follow international conventions such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child which can lead to strict lawmaking related to child protection. States may require social media platforms to comply with these international standards (Quayle, 2022);
- 4) Partnering with platforms: Governments can work with social media platforms to develop stricter internal policies related to harmful or illegal content. This could include more sophisticated monitoring algorithms to identify and remove inappropriate content (R. Guo et al., 2011);
- 5) Education and awareness-raising: In addition to the law, education and public awareness about the risks of harmful or pornographic content on social media are also important. Educational campaigns can help parents and children understand how to protect themselves from age-inappropriate exposure to pornography (Livingstone et al., 2014);
- 6) Selective supervision by families, especially parents, and education about the dangers of pornographic content for children's mental development. In addition, through the world of education (schools) can also conduct sexual education to children and instill ethical values and politeness, so that children can avoid negative values, especially pornography. Ali, Haykal, and Youssef, "Child Sexual Abuse and the Internet Systematic Review."

Efforts to overcome obstacles in law enforcement and child protection

The penal policy against social media pornography in Indonesia is still not optimal, especially in the enforcement of criminal law through the ITE Law and the Criminal Code, due to jurisdictional problems. Cybercrime, such as pornography on social media is usually carried out across countries, Indonesian law enforcement (police) cannot make forced attempts to make arrests, so coordination with

local police is needed. This certainly takes a long time, so it is likely that the suspect can escape, especially if the Indonesian state does not establish diplomatic relations with the country concerned (Kefale et al., 2021).

In addition, the non-penal policy also has some obstacles, such as in the case of blocking content or social media sites that can be circumvented with the help of VPNs, to unblock access. Education and mentoring efforts in Indonesia still lack skilled teachers who master internet technology and psychological assistance for children victims of pornography, especially those in remote areas. The role and awareness of the majority of parents in supervising their children in using social media is also very minimal. This is because most parents are busy working to earn a living so they do not have enough time to supervise their children's activities (Jackson et al., 2007). This condition makes legal protection efforts for children not run optimally and therefore, the government needs assistance from external parties such as UNICEF, to work together to overcome these obstacles.

On a global scale, UNICEF plays an important role in preventing the problem of pornography and sexual violence against children around the world through programs such as:

- a) Education and Awareness: UNICEF works with governments and other organizations to provide education on the dangers of child pornography to children, parents, and educators (Sultana et al., 2023);
- b) Legal Protection: support government efforts to create and enforce laws protecting children from sexual exploitation and pornography (Xavier et al., 2023);
- c) Policy Development: plays a role in developing policies that support the protection of children from pornography, including the development of guidelines and regulations (Hinterleitner & Wittwer, 2023):
- d) Psychosocial Support: UNICEF also provides psycho-social support to children who

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are victims of pornography or sexual exploitation (Teutsch et al., 2023);

e) International Collaboration: UNICEF works with international organizations and other relevant parties to address the global problem of child pornography (Sloan et al., 2021).

UNICEF has built advocacy platforms and technical guidance for the prevention and response of sexual violence against children (Fitt et al., 2023) in various programs including the global partnership program to end violence against children, together for girls, and the global alliance WePROTECT to end online child sexual exploitation (Allen, 2021).

In Indonesia, in 2022, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection together with UNICEF launched the Prevention of Violence and Sexual Exploitation of Children Online (P-OCSEA) program (Binford, 2023). This collaboration aims to create a safe and child-friendly environment in cyberspace. P-OCSEA activities are carried out in the form of education and empowerment of children and parents, research to build policies, advocacy, coaching, and strengthening policies for child protection from pornography, including the development of guidelines and regulations, and services for children.

#### Conclusion

In general, the effects of pornography can weaken individual and social functioning. The psychological impact of child victims of pornography on social media includes anxiety and stress disorders, deviations in sexual perception, identity and body image disorders, decreased social and interaction skills, difficulty in learning, and poor self-concept and self-image. In some cases, children exposed to pornography will experience a decrease in IQ and mental disorders in terms of sexuality. Legal policies and regulations regarding pornography on social media are regulated in Article 29 to

Article 41 of Law Number: 44 of 2008 concerning Pornography, Article 27 Paragraph (1) and Article 45 of Law Number: 19 of 2016 concerning Electronic Information and Transactions, 67 A of Law 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection and the provisions of Article 282 Paragraph (1) and Paragraph (2) of the Criminal Code.

Policies in anticipating children exposed to pornography on social media are carried out in the form of age verification, content blocking reports, compliance with international child protection standards, collaborating with platforms, education and awareness-raising, and selective supervision by families. In addition, the World Child Protection Agency (UNICEF) can also play a role in preventing the problem of pornography and sexual violence against children around the world through various programs such as legal protection, socialization, policy formation, psychological assistance, and rehabilitation of child victims, and international collaboration. Penal policy against social media pornography in Indonesia is still not optimal, especially in criminal law enforcement through the ITE Law and the Criminal Code, due to jurisdictional issues between countries. Nonpenal policies also have several obstacles, such as the existence of alternative options (VPNs) in blocking content. lack of psychological assistance, and lack of parental role and supervision to monitor children's internet activities.

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