

# Research Articles

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# Sexual Behavior and Rights in Indonesian Prisons: A Qualitative Study Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior

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#### **KEYWORDS**

Prisoners' Rights; Sexual Health; Theory of Planned Behavior; Prison Policy; Indonesia

#### **ABSTRACT**

**Introduction:** This study aimed to explore the policies and institutional factors influencing the fulfillment of prisoners' sexual needs in Indonesia, particularly within the context of correctional health. With overcrowding in Indonesian prisons reaching as high as 370%, such as in the Class IIA Jember Penitentiary, and the lack of clear regulations addressing sexual rights, the objective was to examine behavioral drivers and systemic gaps using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework to address unmet needs and prevent deviant sexual behavior. The TPB guided a deductive thematic analysis. Attitudes were operationalized as participants' beliefs about outcomes, subjective norms as perceived social approval or pressure, and perceived behavioral control as perceived capacity/resources to enact or resist sexual behavior.

**Methods:** This exploratory qualitative study was conducted at the Class IIA Jember Correctional Facility in 2022. A total of 15 informants were recruited using a snowball sampling technique, including the Head of the Correctional Facility, prison officers, health workers, and inmates. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically with deductive approach. Transcripts underwent verbatim transcription, TPB-focused line-by-line coding, coding matrices, and credibility checks (independent double-coding and member validation). Ethical approval was obtained from 173/KEPK/FKM-UNEJ/IV/2022 and both verbal and written informed consent were secured from all participants.

**Results:** The primary findings indicated that subjective norms and perceived behavioral control significantly influenced prisoners' intentions to engage in risky sexual behavior. Contributing factors included ambiguous regulations on sexual health education and inmate guidance, the suboptimal implementation of assimilation and reintegration policies, and the absence of a formal conjugal visit program. These regulatory shortcomings may increase the risk of sexually transmitted disease transmission within the prison environment.

**Conclusion:** This study contributes to the understanding of sexual health policy implementation within Indonesian correctional institutions by identifying key regulatory and systemic deficiencies. It offers critical insights into how institutional support, or its absence, influences inmates' health-related behaviors. Future research should focus on developing and implementing policies that safeguard prisoners' sexual health rights, thereby advancing knowledge in the fields of correctional health and human rights.

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#### INTRODUCTION

This article focuses on addressing a fundamental requirement for inmates in Indonesia: the sexual environment within prisons. Human sexuality is acknowledged as a crucial aspect of life. Mismanagement of this aspect can significantly impact sexual conduct (1). Problems may arise for individuals when there is an escalation in libido and sexual desire, yet there is insufficient opportunity for freedom and satisfaction (2). Sexual behaviors like coerced, consensual, masturbation, sex fantasies, sex dreams at night, and homosexuality are common in prisons due to high sexual needs (3,4). Meanwhile, biological needs are primary needs for everyone, and to fulfill sexual needs, one can use various means such as sexual intercourse and even deviant behavior (5).

Prisoners, like all individuals, have fundamental biological needs that must be acknowledged and addressed by the government despite their incarceration. This includes prioritizing regulations that govern these needs, essential rights that are indispensable to all prisoners. Despite the shift from traditional prisons to correctional facilities, the challenge of meeting inmates' sexual needs persists without a clear resolution (5). Therefore, it is the state's responsibility to regulate this right through legislation. Sexual deviance among prisoners often arises from unmet sexual needs. Limited contact with the opposite sex can lead to deviant sexual behavior, potentially causing individuals who initially had normal sexual orientations to adopt homosexual or bisexual behaviors (6).

The right to spousal visits is not explicitly regulated by law and regulations. As a result, spousal visitation policies remain weak and need to be improved, particularly in terms of poorly regulated regulations. The right of prisoners to fulfill their sexual needs must be strictly regulated. The legal ambiguity surrounding spousal visits has led to many negative effects, including an increase in sexual crimes and recidivism, as well as delays in prisoner assimilation and rehabilitation programs. From the perspective of integrated sentencing objectives, fulfilling prisoners' sexual needs or spousal visitation rights is a humane disciplinary measure that protects both society and prisoners. However, decisions regarding spousal visitation policies must consider all inmates held in correctional facilities as a whole, not just a portion of them. Therefore, ideal regulations are needed to ensure that female inmates in correctional facilities can also utilize this policy appropriately and in accordance with the law (41).

Understanding inmates' intentions regarding their sexual needs is essential for devising effective interventions. Inmates can only fulfill their sexual needs with their partners during family visitation leave (CMK), which cannot be done at any time, especially when the urge strikes. Inmates are also unable to fulfill their sexual needs during visits to prisons or detention centers. Inmates living in a homogenous environment often experience sexual perversion. Therefore, strategic steps in the form of policies are needed to regulate the fulfillment of sexual needs. These policies are needed to maintain balance in addressing emerging issues and to control the implementation of fulfilling inmates' sexual needs to prevent deviations.

Several international studies in the field of carceral sexuality emphasize the importance of recognizing prisoners' sexual rights as integral to their well-being and rehabilitation (43). International regulations, such as the Mandela Rules, also stipulate that if intimate visits are permitted, they must be granted without discrimination (44). Recent research from Finland further demonstrated that intimate visits, sexual desire, and gender are among the strongest predictors of sexual activity among inmates (45). Integrating these insights suggests that Indonesian policy could learn from international practices by considering structured opportunities for intimate visitation to mitigate excessive psychological pressure.

Within the framework of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), prison-related literature highlights the significance of constructs such as self-efficacy and social norms, particularly family and peer support, in shaping inmates' intentions (46). Studies applying TPB in correctional contexts indicate that its constructs significantly predict behavioral intentions, such as condom use or abstaining from misconduct following release (47). These findings underscore the importance of focusing on perceived control and normative influences when designing interventions. At the same time, restrictive policies on sexual behavior in correctional facilities should be complemented by approaches that acknowledge prisoners' human rights and biological needs. Such comparative and theoretical perspectives strengthen the rationale for policies that not only regulate but also manage inmates' sexual needs in ways that promote both individual well-being and institutional security (43).

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is a widely used psychological model that explains human behavior by linking beliefs to intentions and actions, emphasizing that behavior is directly influenced by behavioral intentions shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (7). TPB explores how intentions are formed through attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, reflecting beliefs about outcomes and their significance in guiding behavior (8). Attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioral control are key predictors of behavior, especially among incarcerated individuals. TPB effectively predicts behavioral intentions, indicating a significant variance of 32% to 59% (9). Unmet sexual needs and heightened desires often lead to sexually deviant behavior in this population (10). Correctional institutions have implemented various policies to restrict sexual behavior but still cannot eliminate sexual desires. The study aimed to examine the policies of government institutions (ministries or agencies) to fulfill the sexual needs of prisoners in Indonesia. This study is urgently needed to address the critical gap in understanding and regulating the sexual needs of inmates within Indonesian prisons, ensuring that policies effectively balance human rights, biological necessities, and behavioral management to reduce deviant sexual behavior and enhance overall prison welfare.

#### **METHOD**

# Research Type

This research used qualitative research methods with a case study approach. A case study is a qualitative research method that involves an in-depth, contextual analysis of a single event, situation, or individual to explore complex phenomena within their real-life context. It emphasizes detailed examination and thick description to understand the interplay of various factors and provide holistic insights rather than generalizable results (11). In this study, a case study approach was applied to explore the experiences of prisoners in fulfilling their sexual needs through the lens of the Theory of Planned Behavior. This method allowed for an in-depth, contextual analysis of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control within the unique prison environment.

# Population and Sample/Informants

Informants involved in the study were key informant, main informants, and additional informants. The key informant in this study was the Head of the Inmate Guidance Section. In the Indonesian correctional system, the inmate guidance process is overseen by the Head of the Inmate and Juvenile Guidance Section (Kasi Pembinaan Narapidana dan Anak Didik), therefore this key informant is considered to have in-depth knowledge and direct awareness of conditions in the field. The main informants were inmates who were over 18 years old and had served more than 6 months in the prison while additional informants were prison officers/jailers/prison health workers. The main informants were recruited using the purposive and snowball sampling technique. Five main informants were male and residents of Jember Regency. For more details, see Table 1.

Table 1. Participants Demographic Data

The Participant's Initials	Age	Sex	<b>Duration of Punishment (years)</b>	Case	<b>Marital Status</b>	Religion
P1	38	Male	5	Rape	Married	Islam
P2	20	Male	2	Rape	Single	Islam
P3	28	Male	6	Rape	Married	Islam
P4	31	Male	1	Drugs	Married	Islam
P5	26	Male	1	Drugs	Married	Islam

Sources: Personal Data (2023)

#### **Research Location**

This study was conducted in the city of Jember, East Java, specifically at the Jember Class IIA Penitentiary. The facility is the largest correctional institution in the eastern region of East Java and holds the third-highest inmate population density in the province, following Malang City and Surabaya City.

#### **Instrumentation or Tools**

This qualitative study employed a snowball sampling technique to recruit participants. Data collection involved in-depth interviews lasting approximately one hour each, supported by probing questions guided by a semi-

structured interview guide, as well as direct observations of participants during the interview sessions. The research process followed several stages: problem formulation, selection of data collection methods, data gathering (including observations and interviews), data analysis, conclusion drawing, and reporting of findings.

#### **Data Collection Procedures**

Data collection used indepth interview and observation. The interviews were conducted by researchers in the prison hall for security reasons for approximately 3 hours after community guidance activities carried out by prison officers which are routinely carried out every day. Some of the things studied include the attitude towards behavior, subjective norms and perceived behavior control towards the intention to engage in sexual behavior at the Jember Class IIA Penitentiary.

# **Data Analysis**

Data analysis used thematic content analysis with deductive approach guided by the TPB. Since the interview guide was structured according to TPB domains, the coding process directly classified participants' narratives into predetermined categories: attitude toward behavior, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and intention. The analytic procedure involved the following steps: 1) Transcription. All audio recordings of interviews were transcribed verbatim in Bahasa Indonesia. 2) Deductive Coding. Using TPB as a framework, transcripts were reviewed line by line and participants' statements were directly categorized into the corresponding constructs (e.g., statements reflecting beliefs about sexual needs were coded under attitude, while descriptions of peer influence were coded under subjective norms. 3) Data Organization. Codes were organized into coding matrices to facilitate comparisons between groups of informants (inmates, prison officers, health workers). 4) Theme Consolidation. Within each TPB construct, subcategories were developed inductively from the data to capture nuances (e.g., masturbation as coping under attitude; peer tolerance under subjective norms). 5) Credibility Checks – To ensure rigor, two researchers independently coded a subset of transcripts and discussed discrepancies until consensus was reached (intercoder agreement). In addition, member validation was performed with two participants to confirm that the interpretation accurately reflected their perspectives.

To strengthen the trustworthiness of this qualitative study, several strategies were applied:

Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement in the field, enabling the researchers to build trust and rapport with participants and thereby capture rich and nuanced insights into their experiences. Reflexivity was also maintained throughout the research process, with researchers acknowledging and bracketing their own biases to minimize distortions in data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Furthermore, triangulation of data sources (inmates, officers, and health workers) and methods (interviews and observations) was applied to cross-verify findings and strengthen validity.

Transferability was addressed by providing thick descriptions of the prison context, participants, and procedures, allowing readers to assess the applicability of the findings to other contexts. Sampling strategies were clearly explained to justify the inclusion of participants and demonstrate the potential relevance of findings to similar populations.

Dependability was ensured by maintaining detailed methodological documentation and an audit trail of research procedures, coding processes, and analytic decisions. This transparency enables other researchers to assess or replicate the study's dependability.

Confirmability was strengthened through peer debriefing with academic supervisors and colleagues to validate interpretations and minimize researcher bias. Member checking was also conducted by sharing preliminary findings with selected participants to ensure their perspectives were accurately represented. Additionally, reflexive journaling was maintained throughout the study to document evolving insights, biases, and reflections, thereby enhancing transparency and objectivity.

# **Ethical Approval**

This research has been approved by the Health Research Ethics Commission (KEPK) of the Faculty of Public Health, University of Jember, under ethics approval number 173/KEPK/FKM-UNEJ/IV/2022.

#### RESULTS

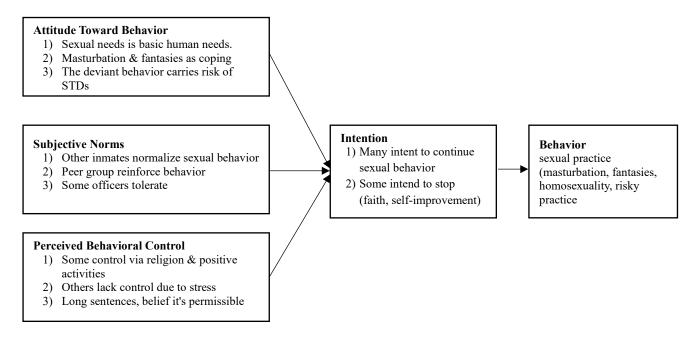


Figure 1. Sexual Behavior in Prisons based on TPB Framework

Based on data analysis from indepth-interview and observation, four main themes emerged: 1) Attitude Towards Behavior, 2) Subjective Norms of Inmates, 3) Perception of Prisoners Behavior Control, and 4) Intention. The four main themes are related to the intention to engage in sexual behavior and the study implications contain regulations or policies of the relevant ministries and correctional institutions.

# **Theme 1: Attitude Towards Behavior of Inmates**

The results of the study show that some of the main informants (P1 and P2) consider sexual behavior in prison to be a fundamental human need. The main informant stated that sexual needs must be fulfilled, as illustrated in the following interview excerpt:

"How come? I'm confused too — how can the prison be so restrictive, yet at night I am still able to engage in self-stimulation. In my view, these needs exist because sexual desires must be fulfilled.

"Of course, if you're in prison, sexual behavior is a primary needs, so all prisoners definitely feel that need; usually, they just masturbate right away, bro." (P2, 20 years old)

Another main informant (P4) believes that fulfilling sexual needs is a common behavior among prisoners. The informant revealed that such sexual behavior is performed for self-satisfaction. The following quote was taken from an interview with this main informant (P4):

"In my opinion, many prisoners engage in sexual activities by themselves. For me, it is for personal satisfaction because I cannot be close to my loved one (my wife). Usually, prisoners' activities do not extend to homosexuality or other behaviors involving other people." (P4, 31 years old)

Additional informants P1 and P2 also regard sexual needs as necessary. However, some additional informants (prison officers and prison health workers) disagree with fulfilling these needs in prison due to concerns about legality and the risk of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) associated with same-sex activities and other sexual deviant. They consider sexual needs as a human right but must be limited, as quoted from an interview with an additional informant as follows:

"First, sexual behavior in prison is actually one of the basic human needs; this was something I did learn about in college. Indeed, sexual needs are fundamental. However, engaging in such behavior in prison without a legal partner and with someone of the same sex carries a risk of transmitting sexually transmitted

diseases (STDs). Therefore, in my personal opinion, it should not be done." (P1, 28 years old; prison health officer)

"Yes, everyone— inmates are human beings too; they have biological needs just like people outside. However, here those needs are restricted because their rights must be limited." (P2, 42 years old; prison officer's)

Meanwhile, another main informant (P5) considered sexual behavior to fulfill sexual needs within prison as inappropriate and unsuitable. The following excerpt is quoted from an interview with the informant as follows:

"In my opinion, it's not appropriate because this is not the right place. I am married; however, I have engaged in such behavior but not with my wife. So this is what happens." (P5, 25 years old)

#### **Impacts Associated with Sexual Behavior**

The findings reveal that three out of five informants (P1, P2, and P3) view sexual behavior in prison as a means of refreshment. The effects of masturbation include feelings of satisfaction, relaxation, and a temporary reduction in sexual desire. This feeling was expressed by the main informant in the following interview excerpt:

"In my opinion, yes; it helps reduce tension so that I don't miss my wife as much." (P1, 38 years old)

"For me personally, the benefit is to clear a stuffy [cluttered] mind." (P3, 28 years old)

Meanwhile, another informant (P2) stated that he engaged in sexual behavior simply to pass the time, as illustrated in the following quote:

"The benefit we experience is relief from weakness, especially when we cannot sleep despite wanting to. It is better to do something like this than nothing at all; afterward, we no longer feel weak." (P2, 20 years old)

Three of the five main informants (P2, P3, and P4) believe that masturbation in prison can cause lower back pain and physical weakness. Furthermore, P4 mentioned that this behavior may also result in hernias and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) like syphilis as the following quote: The impact is like sexually transmitted disease. Many prisoners here suffer from sexually transmitted infections, such as syphilis. I once contracted syphilis and obtained thiamycin (medicine) from a fellow inmate. I frequently experienced syphilis and brought the infection into this place. Several prisoners I know also contracted it while in prison. When I asked one prisoner about his condition, he remained silent.

#### **Theme 2: Subjective Norms of Inmates**

Based on in-depth interviews with all five main informants, it was found that all the main informants perceived other inmates as likely to allow sexual deviant behavior within the prison. The subjective norms of the main informants support the deviant sexual behavior of the prisoners. Other inmates regarded this as common occurence. This is disclosed as per the following interview:

"I think it's common to people do it like that, and for me it's normal. Other inmates would surely agree with my statement." (P1, 38 years old)

"...There is a problem, some are mediocre, some blame it, if someone reports it [doing deviant behavior], they will be beaten." (P2, 20 years old)

"It's just a joke. Sometimes it's being bullied, it's laughed at, it's just being bullied and embarrassed." (P3, 28 years old)

The informants (P1, P2, and P3) revealed that other inmates allowed the sexual needs fulfilment behavior to even be blamed but also laughed at it to shame. In addition, another main informant (P4) revealed that other inmates also performed certain sexual behaviors under certain conditions, as quoted as follows:

"...If it is caught by a "ustadz (experts in the field of religious knowledge)" it is permissible as long as it is still in the bathroom, because there are prisoners masturbating in sarongs, it is not permissible because it is a place for prayer and is afraid of causing uncleanness." (P4, 31 years old)

Based on the subjective norm, it can be concluded that all the main informants perceived that other inmates supported sexual behavior in prison and in addition prison officers tend to allow sexual deviant behavior in prison.

# **Prison Officer's Support**

Based on in-depth interviews with the five main informants, it was found that all the main informants were of the view that the prison officers supported sexual deviant behavior within the prison. The main informant (P1) revealed that officers were not aware of what the prisoners were doing inside the prison. One of the main informants (P3) also said it would be understandable if the officers discovered it. This is explained in the interview as follows:

"Looks like the warden doesn't know we're doing that [doing deviant behavior] because prisoners are free to do anything in prison." (P1, 38 years old)

"...If the warden and officer finds out he will be forgiven, there was an incident before but after that he was humiliated" (P3, 28 years old)

In contrast, an additional informant (P1) stated:

"We call the person and we ask the reason why do that. If the reason can not be justified then we will give sanctions and after that we give them education and check their health." (P1, 24 years old)

#### **Theme 3: Perception of Prisoners Behavior Control**

Based on the results of the interviews, the main informants (P1 and P4) controlled their sexual behavior by avoiding them. The main informant's reason for avoiding sexual behavior in prisons is because he thinks about his family at home and feels that his sexual behavior will remind the main informant of his ruined career and future, as described in the following interview:

"First, I can't do anything here, all I can do is pray for family. Now its time for me to repent and don't think about things anymore. I feel sorry for my parents, im living my punishment because im responsible for my future and i destroy it. But actually to do deviant sexual things is still exist, cause im also human. (P4, 31 years old)

Other informants (P2, P3, and P5) did not have the control to avoid sexual behavior in prisons. The main informants (P3 and P2) felt that the desire for sexual behavior was still high because the punishment was too long, which made them stressed or stuffy; they experienced sexual intercourse before and wanted to do that again. The lacked of behavioral ccontrol among main informants was noted in the following interview excerpt:

"Yes, because of human needs, because I've done the original thing [having sex], so I was inspired to want more." (P2, 20 years old)

"I have a wife. Have you ever felt like that, then after being punished for so long you never feel like that [sexual things] again, the desire is high, you definitely want it." (P3, 28 years old)

Another main informant (P5) revealed that he did not control his behavior and continue doing sexual behavior which he believed was allowed in his religion. To him it is permissible to carry out sexual behavior in the form of masturbation because it is a sunnah act. This is confirmed in the following interview:

"I think [masturbation] is allowed in my faith [Islam], so i keep doing it. Yes, I don't know, it seems like it's sunnah, for those who are not married, hahaha (laugh)."

# **Distraction and Positive Activities**

Distraction activities could help informsnts avoid certain sexual behavior in prison. Majority of key informants (P1, P3, P4, and P5) agreed that by keeping themselves busy with joyous activities, they could refrain from performing deviant sexual behavior. In supporting the notion, the main informants kept themselves busy by carrying out positive activities such as performing the work given by the authority and worshiping Allah SWT. The situations are described in the following interview excerpt:

"Every day I try to be busy with activities like that (pray and reading Quran)." (P3, 28 years old)

"I just don't want to be like that again, everyday I try to read a Quran. If i want to sleep, so I sleep." (P4, 31 years old)

#### **Theme 4: Intention**

The results revealed that among five main informants, three individuals (P1, P2, and P5) did not intend to cease engaging in deviant sexual behaviors because they viewed such behaviors as essential needs that must be fulfilled during incarceration as described in the following interview:

"What else can I do if I want to? Outside prison, you should seriously consider your intention to stop because there you can have a wife here. But for now, since I don't have a wife here, I feel this situation is humane, sir." (P2, 20 years old)

Only a small number of main informants (specifically P3) expressed an intention not to participate in deviant sexual behaviors, as illustrated by the following interview excerpt:

"Definitely—there is about an 80% intention to quit. Yes, I have the intention to stop because my past experiences have taught me valuable lessons; therefore, I don't want those things to happen again in my life. That's why I'm here—to train my mindset so that I won't repeat those actions. Every day, I keep myself busy, bro." (P3, 28 years old)

Another informant (P4) intended to abstain from such behavior by strengthening his faith, as demonstrated through daily religious practices such as congregational prayers and recitation of the Al-Quran, as illustrated by the following interview excerpt: "I haven't done that for five months, bro; so indirectly, I often have wet dreams. However, since I frequently study the Quran, pray regularly, and go to the mosque often, bro, I intend to stop."

#### DISCUSSIONS

#### **Theme 1: Attitude Towards Behavior of Inmates**

Attitude is defined in contemporary social psychology as a person's level of evaluation of a behavior; this evaluation can be positive, negative, or neutral, and is influenced by their opinion of the outcome of the action (41). Behavioral beliefs form the foundation of a person's attitude and are influenced by outcome evaluation, which reflects whether the consequences of a behavior are liked or disliked (13). Positive evaluations tend to increase an individual's intention to perform specific behaviors. Attitude is considered crucial in social psychology because it influences both individual and group behaviors (14). It encompasses feelings and thoughts that motivate someone to act depending on whether they like or dislike the behavior (15).

Most main informants view sexual behavior as a fundamental human need, consistent with Maslow's theory that sexual needs must be fulfilled. If these needs are not met adequately, sexual deviations may occur. Sexual needs have existed since birth; this is supported by additional informants P1 and P2 who also regard them as necessary (16). Liana (2019) stated that inappropriate sexual behavior violates community norms and constitutes a violation or crime under the Criminal Code. From a psychological standpoint, these findings underscore how sexuality remains an intrinsic part of human identity, even under restrictive conditions like incarceration.

According to Maslow's theory on motivation source, unmet basic physiological needs, including sex, can lead to frustration or maladaptive behaviors such as what is termed "sexual deviation" here (e.g., masturbation or other sexual activities) to fulfill these drives. This aligns with the informants' views that sexual behavior is a fundamental human need essential for mental well-being. Prolonged sexual deprivation can contribute to increased aggression, depression, anxiety disorders, and lowered self-esteem among inmates due to unmet biological drives combined with the effects of social isolation. The frustration-aggression hypothesis suggests that blocked goals, in this case fulfilling sexual desires, can increase irritability or deviant behaviors if they are not properly managed psychologically (18).

Prison environments are inherently stressful due to isolation, loss of freedom, and social stigma. Sexual behavior, including masturbation, is often used as a coping mechanism to alleviate stress and anxiety by providing temporary relief through physical pleasure and relaxation. This is consistent with Folkman & Lazarus' transactional model of stress and coping, where individuals use emotion-focused strategies (like masturbation) when problem-focused solutions (e.g., changing environment) are unavailable (19). This is aligns with McLennan (20) findings, which explored psychological stressors experienced by incarcerated individuals and their coping mechanisms. The key stressors identified included a lack of physical and emotional closeness, loss of autonomy, social isolation, and separation from loved ones—factors that significantly impact mental well-being. The coping strategies observed included withdrawal/isolation, self-expression (including sexual behavior), maintaining connections with the outside world, and efforts toward self-improvement.

Based on interviews with key informants and analysis results, it can be concluded that their attitudes toward sexual behavior in prison tend to be supportive, viewing it as normal and a fundamental human need that must be fulfilled. However, they also recognize the negative consequences associated with this behavior. This aligns with

Abdullah (21) findings, which state that positive attitudes and perceptions toward sexual activity are closely linked to intentions to reduce risky sexual behaviors. Positive attitudes and perceptions toward sexual activity were significantly associated with stronger intentions to engage in safer sex practices and reduce risky sexual behaviors.

#### **Theme 2: Subjective Norms of Inmates**

Subjective norm is an individual's belief about social pressure perceived from their surrounding environment concerning whether or not to perform a particular behavior (7). In this study's context, subjective norm refers to prisoners' perceptions of fellow inmates' or others' opinions that influence their decisions to engage in sexual behavior while incarcerated. This norm reflects an individual's understanding of important people's expectations in their life regarding specific behaviors.

These results are confirmed by a study entitled Sexual Behavior in Prison Populations Understood Through the Framework of Rational Choice and Exchange Theory. The study found that norms formed by groups, especially those controlled by powerful inmates, can encourage conformity to certain sexual behaviors. This is a practical manifestation of subjective norms in the prison environment (42).

The interviews demonstrate that most of the main informants believed that other inmates allowed sexual deviant behavior in prisons. This can be one of the reasons that inmates commit a sexually deviant behavior in the prison. Similarly, fellow roommates who support deviant behavior can be another reason why inmates commit a sexually deviant behavior in the prison. In addition, homosexuality was encouraged in the prison due to the acceptance of prisoners, prison guard and authorities (22). According to Schippers (2024) whether or not the loose values and norms are present in the social environment can be a factor in a person's ability to perform deviant sexual behavior. The measure of deviant behavior is not a measure of good-bad or right-wrong according to the general sense, but rather based on the looseness of societal norms and values that are certainly different from one environment to another. Setiowati (23) reported that attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, behavioral belief, normative belief, and control belief indirectly influence positive sexual behavior. This aligns with Zanden (26) & Schippers (2024) examines the role of social environments within prisons in shaping and normalizing sexually deviant behaviors.

The research emphasizes that inmates' actions are heavily influenced by their peer groups, which may normalize or even encourage such behaviors. This finding supports the notion that acceptance or support from fellow roommates or peers can be a significant factor motivating inmates to engage in sexually deviant acts. According to Social Learning Theory (SCT) by Bandura (24) individuals learn behaviors through observing others, especially within close social groups. In prisons, where social environments are tightly knit and hierarchical, inmates may adopt deviant sexual behaviors as a learned response modeled by peers. The concept of normative social influence explains how individuals conform to group norms to gain acceptance or avoid rejection (25). If sexually deviant behavior is normalized or encouraged within inmate peer groups, individuals are more likely to engage in such acts.

The statement of the additional informant (P1) shows that prison officials do not allow deviant sexual behaviour without consequences but rather provide sanctions with the aim of rehabilitation. After imposing sanctions, officers also provide education and health checks to help prisoners change for the better. This is confirmed by an article written by Zanden (26) that prison administrators allow homosexuality as a method of control, viewing it as a way to relieve prisoner tensions that lead to hatred, violence, attacks on guards, and rebellion. Both authorities within correctional facilities and public officials often overlook issues within prisons, fearing backlash from the public. This is especially evident when dealing with sensitive matters such as sexuality.

The findings of this study demonstrated that subjective norm played a pivotal role in prisoners' sexual behaviour. The support of the closest people such as other inmates, friends of inmates, and officers encouraged their sexual behaviour in prison. In line with TPB the prisoners' intentions in sexual behavior are strongly influenced by the subjective norms of the prisoners themselves. As revealed by all the main informants, other inmates and officers supported sexual behavior in prisons. The support showed by inmates and officers have influenced and strengthened prisoners' desire to commit sexual behaviour. However, the findings was not in line with Fleisher and Krienert (27) research's findings which reported that sexual deviations rarely occur due to environmental factors in prison. In fact, the study revealed that rape among male and female inmates was rare in prison. The prisoners formed their own "communities" to maintain peace and social order. Inmates also noted the existence of cultural norms that promote

physical safety and provide social and emotional support. However, there is disagreement among prisoners in assessing acts of sexual violence as coercion or rape. Nevertheless, inmates agree that prison rape is detrimental to the social balance.

# **Theme 3: Perception of Prisoners Behavior Control**

Perceived behavioral control refers to an individual's effort to regulate their own behavior. Perceived behavioral control describes a person's perception of their ability to perform specific behaviors. Perceived behavior control is an attempt by the informant to control his behavior argued that perceived behavior control refers to the individual's perception of displaying the ability to perform certain behaviors (40).

According to the interviews with the prisoners regarding the perception of behavioral control of prisoners, it was found that the majority of other informants (P2, P3, and P5) did not have control to avoid sexual behavior in prison. The main informants (P3 and P2) felt that the desire for sexual behavior remained high because the punishment was too long, which made them stressed or felt constrained; they have had sexual intercourse before and want to do it again. This is in line with the research by Ratifa (29) which states that there is a relationship between the length of detention and sexual behavior in prisons.

Prisoners with long prison terms and unable to meet their families can be a factor in engaging in abnormal sexual behavior. The more often the inmates are visited, the more normal the inmates' sexual behavior is due to the presence of loved ones and the support of the loved ones. This aligns with psychological theories on self-regulation and impulse control, which emphasize that individuals' ability to regulate impulses depends on both internal factors (e.g., motivation, beliefs) and external constraints (e.g., environment) (30).

Stress caused by long incarceration periods can impair self-control mechanisms through increased anxiety or depression, reducing PBC over deviant behaviors. Sexual activity might serve as an emotional coping mechanism for prisoners facing prolonged isolation or deprivation. Similarly, Sukmawati (31) concur that there is a relationship between self-control and sexual behavior.

Factors that influence sexual behavior are self-control which relates to how a person controls his emotions and impulses within himself. The main informant's perception of behavioral control was stated in the previous interview above. In another interview, the main informant (P5) revealed that he did not control his behavior by carrying out sexual activities because he still wanted to continue the behavior he considered permissible. The main informant said that in his religion, engaging in sexual behavior in the form of masturbation is considered permissible because it is a sunnah act. The main informant's (P5) statement contradicts the finding of Umar & Musyahid (32) which emphasised that the behavior is prohibited in Islam.

Moreover, the legality of masturbation remains a topic of debate due to its association with taboo and deviant behavior, often resulting in prohibition. This prohibition is closely linked to the ensuing consequences. It can be concluded from this study that behavior control of most of the main informants (P1, P3, P4, and P5) to avoid sexual behavior was achieved by participating in positive activities in prison to keep themselves busy. This is contrary to the perceived behavior control of the main informants (P2, P3, and P5) who yearn to perform sexual behavior because of high sexual desire caused by several factors such as the length of the prison sentence.

According to the TPB, perceived behavioral control serves as the third predictor of intention and directly impacts behavior. Perceived Behavior Control can moderate the effects of attitudes and subjective norms on intentions, thereby adding complexity to the understanding of the factors that influence prisoner behavior (27). It pertains to an individual's beliefs about control and the ease or difficulty of performing specific actions. Findings from the analysis reveal that the perception of behavioral control does not notably influence the level of sexual behavior. This shows that the perception of sexual behavior does not decrease or increase the desire or intensity not to engage in sexual behavior in prisons.

There is no relationship and influence between perceived behavioral control and intensity of behavior indicating the ease or difficulty of performing sexual behavior in prisons. Prisoners' habits complicate the wish to stop sexual behavior. Even though there are positive activities such as religious activities, arts, and entrepreneurship to educate and nurture the prisoners in the prison; the activities did not cease the desire to stop sexual behavior. The values that exist within prisoners are not easy to change, as such it is difficult to stop the desire to engage in risky and deviant sexual behavior.

The perception of control applied here is powerful because most main informants (P1, P3, P4, and P5) can control their behavior by avoiding the undesirable activities and involving in other positive activities. This is contrary to the beliefs of the control main informants (P2, P3, and P5), who still want to perform sexual behavior because of high sexual desire caused by several factors such as the period of punishment, experienced sexual behavior before, and belief that they are allowed to commit a crime.

#### **Theme 4: Intention**

Intention is a crucial factor influencing whether someone performs a particular behavior (7). The TPB posits that intention is shaped by three independent variables: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. These variables collectively form an intention that acts as a mediator for executing specific behaviors. The intention factor in an individual is a cause of deviant sexual behavior (Pusrikasari, 2010). Intention serves as one of the primary drivers for main informants to engage in behaviors aimed at fulfilling their sexual needs while in prison. Based on the interview results, some informants expressed an intention not to engage in deviant sexual behavior, motivated by a desire to become better individuals and avoid repeating past mistakes; they viewed prison as a place to train their mindset through positive activities.

Attitudes and subjective norms play a crucial role in shaping an individual's intention to engage in sexual behavior, even within restrictive environments such as prisons. Attitudes reflect personal evaluations of the behavior, while subjective norms involve perceived social pressures or expectations from significant others. In prison settings, if inmates perceive that engaging in sexual behavior is normalized or accepted among peers, this can strengthen their intention to participate despite institutional restrictions. However, control beliefs, specific perceptions about factors that facilitate or impede behavior, can sometimes undermine this self-control. For example, feelings of loneliness, stress relief needs, and biological drives can create internal conflicts where inmates feel compelled toward sexual activity despite their intentions not to engage. This tension reflects fundamental human psychological processes involving impulse control and coping mechanisms under stress.

Based on interviews with key informants and analysis results, it can be concluded that their attitudes toward sexual behavior in prison tend to be supportive, viewing it as normal and a fundamental human need that must be fulfilled. However, they also recognize the negative consequences associated with this behavior. This aligns with Abdullah (21) findings, which state that positive attitudes and perceptions toward sexual activity are closely linked to intentions to reduce risky sexual behaviors. Positive attitudes and perceptions toward sexual activity were significantly associated with stronger intentions to engage in safer sex practices and reduce risky sexual behaviors.

# **Study Implications**

# **Indonesian Penitentiary Policies on Sexual Behavior Among Prisoners**

Every Correctional Institution (CI) and State Detention Center can regulate its affairs through a policy issued by the Head of the Work Unit. However, according to the existing legal standing, the prerogative to regulate every activity, facility, or suitability of activity lies with the Head of the Work Unit, and the head is obligated to the prisoners in prison. In Law No. 22 of 2022 concerning Corrections, Article 9 Letters B and D explain that every prisoner has the right to receive physical and spiritual care and health services. Law No.36 of 2009 concerning Health, Article 1, paragraph 3, health services are defined as various activities and/or a series of service activities directly offered to individuals or communities to sustain and enhance public health through promotive, preventive, rehabilitative, and palliative measures.

Furthermore, health efforts are divided into four health services as in Law No. 36 of 2009 concerning Health, Article 1 numbers 12, 13, 14, and 15 clarify that promotive health services encompass activities and a series of health service activities that emphasize health promotion efforts (Kajawo, 2021). However, from the results of the observations and in-depth interviews conducted by researchers with health service officers in CI, health promotion programs have not been carried out regularly. This is supported by the following statement of the Additional Informant (P1; health officer):

"So, if the quota is met, around 40-50 new prisoners will be gathered in the hall. Usually, I give the counseling myself as well as counseling about TB, HIV, PHBS, and COVID. We also collaborate with related agencies

such as NGOs, the Health Service, and educational institutions to provide health education. But this is rarely done nowadays due to time and cost issues. "(P1, 24 years old)

The results of the observations by the researchers at the Jember Class IIA Correctional Institution showed that the health promotion efforts carried out were limited to counseling. There is no health promotion media in CI, such as health education posters or other media. This gives the impression that CI do not pay enough attention to the health problems of the inmates. The research findings also revealed that medical staff in CI faced financial shortages, thus hampering their ability to provide adequate education. Field observations indicated that the Head of Prisoners/Juveniles Guidance and Work Activity Section at Class IIA Penitentiary in Jember administer health programs. This includes civil servants (ASNs) and healthcare workers responsible for inmate guidance and healthcare, ensuring medical services, health education, and disease screening in partnership with the local community health center (Puskesmas). The section prioritizes health promotion strategies through various initiatives and programs (Republik Indonesia, 2009).

In conducting observations, researchers discovered that human resources for health services at the Class IIA Jember Penitentiary were minimal in supporting health in prison, and it was proven that there were only two health workers (doctors and nurses). They would take turns in a shift system during working hours, 07.00 - 17.00. So, at night, there were no health workers on guard. The absence of regulations governing this matter must, of course, be considered by policymakers to optimize the role of health services in correctional institutions. Ideally, the Class IIA Penitentiary clinic requires 13 healthcare professionals to ensure a healthier prison environment. These professionals include general practitioners, dentists, nurses, dental hygienists, midwives, psychology graduates, psychologists, psychiatrists, pharmacists, pharmacy assistants, laboratory analysts, and public health specialists (health promoters, nutritionists, and sanitarians) (34).

CI can potentially become centers for the spread of sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis, HIV, and AIDS. Inmates' sexual deviant behavior, such as homosexuality, can be a significant factor in the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. So, there is a need for outreach by related institutions to provide sexual education to prisoners. Therefore, health education is very important in increasing awareness among inmates in correctional institutions. Training inmates to actively promote health, including teaching them about healthy lifestyles, accessing healthcare services, and fostering a supportive attitude towards mental health, will cultivate a more nutritious and enduring correctional culture.

Increasing awareness of prisoners regarding health, especially reproductive health issues, can change prisoners' views regarding sexual behavior and can influence the subjective norms of prisoners regarding the attitudes of other prisoners toward sexual behavior, which supports the existence of sexual deviation in prison. According to Ajzen (28), subjective norms are formed from social influences from family, friends, or reference groups and, cultural and social norms that apply in society. If prisoners' awareness regarding sexual behavior improves, it will influence other people's views on them, so that they can suppress sexual deviant behavior in prison. This can be a reference for policymakers' decision-making to create a better prison environment, especially about the relationships between prisoners.

# **Training of Correctional Institution Officers About Sexual Health**

To create healthy CI, personnel training is necessary to improve the quality of services. Training and coaching regarding health issues in CI for officers is still not optimal. From the results of in-depth interviews by researchers, it was found that health workers accepted sexual behaviour of prisoners as normal, thus encouraging them to engage in sexually deviant behavior. The aspect of CI officers who seem to condone this behavior can be one of the factors that inmates engage in sexually deviant behavior. The results of the observations showed that up to now, training for Correctional Institution officers prioritizes safety and security for prisoners by Minister of Health No. 33 of 2015 and Minister of Law and Human Rights Regulation No. 8 of 2024 article 36 was inadequate or scarse. These regulations do not regulate training efforts for correctional institution officers regarding the specific sexual needs of prisoners.

CI responsibility include sanctions for prisoners who commit violations in prisons or detention centers. By Law No. 22 of 2022 concerning Corrections, article 11 explains that convicts must obey the rules and regulations in jail. Article 66 letter c explains that correctional institution officers, with the approval of the Head of the Correctional Institution, can impose sanctions on prisoners who commit violations in prison. The sanctions imposed by Article 67

are placement in solitary confinement for a maximum of 12 (twelve) days and postponement or limitation of rights as intended in Article 7 letter k and Article 10 paragraph (1). However, the regulations regarding sanctions are not implemented properly by correctional institution officers, making prisoners feel that correctional institution officers tend to allow sexual deviant behavior to occur in prison.

# **Correctional Regulation on Prisoners Perceived Behavioral Control**

Most prisoners lack control over their sexual behavior, experiencing high sexual desire that, if not properly channeled, can lead to stress and potential sexual deviations within the prison environment. This desire increases with prolonged detention and separation from partners. According to the Law on Corrections, prisoners have rights to family visits, remission, assimilation, conditional leave, and other legal entitlements. One potential solution to managing prisoners' sexual needs is through assimilation programs, which allow prisoners to reintegrate with their families under certain conditions. These programs, such as home assimilation, provide an opportunity for prisoners to fulfill their sexual needs with their spouses or partners and can also reduce overcrowding in correctional facilities.

The evaluation of current assimilation policies shows that home assimilation positively impacts the sustainability of the correctional system, particularly by alleviating overcrowding. These policies could be strengthened by elevating them to government regulations under Law No. 12 of 2011, which would improve their implementation with better budgetary support. The findings from the Jember Class IIA Correctional Institution reveal that while assimilation programs can reduce boredom, prisoners still face challenges in fulfilling their sexual needs. During the COVID-19 era, the home assimilation program allowed prisoners to fulfill their sexual needs, but it was discontinued post-pandemic. Video calls, though available for prisoners without assimilation rights, cannot replace in-person meetings, further highlighting the need for better strategies to address inmates' sexual health needs in correctional institutions. Apart from the assimilation program, prisoners are also entitled to sexual health rights and other biological rights, such as conjugal visits. Access to a legal partner is a must to gain sexual autonomy, as prisoners only lose their independence, not their fundamental rights (37). Conjugal visit is a concept that is predicted to be a solution to the complicated problems that occur. Ideally, this concept prioritizes legally married prisoners with a recognized partner. Even though prisoners' freedom of movement is restricted, their right to fulfill their sexual needs remains intact, and they cannot be castrated. Einat and Rabinovitz (38) emphasised the importance of allowing prisoners to get the conjugal right. They explained that a person in custody has a biological need for sexual fulfillment, as well as a need to eat and drink.

Based on the results of the observations and interviews conducted by researchers, it was found that the Jember Class IIA Correctional Institution yet to have a policy regarding conjugal visits. It is essential to provide conjugal visits so that prisoners can quickly obtain the right to fulfill their sexual needs and have the potential to reduce deviant sexual behavior in prison. However, limited human resources in correctional institutions are one factor in not holding conjugal prison visits. To facilitate Conjugal Visits, there needs to be an adequate number of prison officers to supervise prisoners. Supervision is required both indoors and outdoors. It is essential to monitor inmate behavior, identify those who have demonstrated exemplary behavior, and meet the requirements. To implement the substance of the law effectively, it is essential to have adequate human resources dedicated to its implementation (39).

In addition, Conjugal Visit Practices are vulnerable to illegal levies or bribery and, therefore, require careful consideration. Officers can demand money from inmates for a record of good behavior, thereby entitling them to such rewards. This practice is considered illegal retribution. Inmates can offer money to officers in exchange for good behavior reports, allowing them to receive a Conjugal Visit. This practice is commonly referred to as bribery (40).

# **Interpretation of Key Findings**

Our findings revealed that spending more than three hours per day on social media was significantly associated with increased depressive symptoms (Odds Ratio = 2.5; 95% CI: 1.8–3.5). This suggests that excessive exposure to curated online content and limited face-to-face social interactions may negatively impact adolescents' mental health. These results align with those of Smith et al. (2023), who also identified a strong association between prolonged social media usage and depression among European adolescents (1). However, our study extends the existing evidence by incorporating the role of cultural factors specific to the Indonesian context, where social norms

and familial expectations play a pivotal role in shaping adolescents' experiences with social media (2). This underscores the importance of designing culturally sensitive interventions.

# **CONCLUSION**

Prisoners often view engaging in sexual behavior within prisons as a common practice and a basic human need. The presence of subjective norms among inmates supports such deviant behavior, and even correctional officers overlook or allow its occurrence. As expressed by participants, many inmates rely on solitary masturbation, sexual fantasies, oral sex, or relationships with fellow inmates in different blocks as coping mechanisms to manage stress, loneliness, and prolonged incarceration. These behavioral outcomes are directly shaped by institutional deficits—such as the absence of structured sexual health education, inadequate staffing of health workers, and the lack of clear regulations on sexual health services in correctional institutions—which leave inmates with few alternatives to manage their needs. This study extends the TPB by demonstrating that, in carceral contexts, behavioral intention is not only a function of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, but is also constrained by structural conditions that limit agency. For example, participants described how long sentences, minimal family contact, and the absence of health promotion activities heightened sexual urges and weakened self-control, indicating that environmental and institutional barriers play a critical role in shaping intentions.

To reduce harmful sexual practices and and improve health outcomes, reforms must be grounded in the lived experiences of inmates. Participants emphasized the lack of meaningful health education and described health workers' limited presence as contributing to misinformation and risky practices. Strengthening health promotion programs, expanding family visitation opportunities, and ensuring consistent access to healthcare staff would respond directly to these testimonies. Policymakers should prioritize allocating adequate resources and developing context-specific policies that address sexual and reproductive rights within correctional institutions. Anchoring such reforms in the everyday realities narrated by inmates ensures both empirical validity and the potential for sustainable impact.

#### **AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT**

All authors contributed to the manuscript's conception, design, data collection, organization, and initial drafting.

# **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

The authors state that they have no conflicts of interest that could have affected the writing of this article.

# DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI AND AI-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

In the preparation of this article, I employed Google Translate and Grammarly to support translation, enhance grammatical accuracy, and improve sentence structure. Additionally, I utilized a summarization tool to distill interview transcripts, thereby increasing their conciseness and facilitating clearer interpretation. These tools were used to improve the clarity, readability, and overall quality of the manuscript, without substituting the author's original analysis and critical interpretation.

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