

## The Knowledge and Skill to Articulate Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights among Indigenous Young Women in Papua

**Desintha Dwi Asriani<sup>1</sup>, Godefridus Samderubun<sup>2</sup>, & Eling Wening Pangestu<sup>3</sup>**

Department of Sociology FISIPOL Gadjah Mada University<sup>1&2</sup> &  
Department of Communication FISIPOL Gadjah Mada University<sup>3</sup>

Jalan Sosio Yustitia Nomor 1, Karang Malang, Catur Tunggal, Sleman, Special Region of Yogyakarta<sup>1,2,&3</sup>

desintha@ugm.ac.id<sup>1</sup>, samderubun@unmus.ac.id<sup>2</sup>, & elingpangestu@mail.ugm.ac.id<sup>3</sup>

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### Abstract

This article discusses the extent to which the SRHR narrative is reproduced in the Papuan context. In the process, data collection was carried out by combining document studies, self-reflexive, and interviews. The involvement of one of the researchers who is also an Indigenous Papuan (Orang Asli Papua – OAP) allows for self-reflection regarding the context and issues of SRHR in Papua. While in the interview process, women's bodily experience is placed as a center for understanding the dynamics of reproductive health problems in the broader context of Papua. Specific issues such as unwanted pregnancies (Kehamilan Tidak Diinginkan – KTD) are key topics during the interview process. The results of the study show that SRHR issues among young people in Papua cover specific issues such as unwanted pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and violence against women. However, in the exploration of specific topics such as KTD, it was found that there is a gap in knowledge and skills in understanding and translating the substance of SRHR due to conflicting economic issues, traditions, and changes in meaning around sexuality due to the influence of modernization. Therefore, the intersectionality framework, both theoretically and methodologically, has the potential to be developed for further studies to obtain a comprehensive mapping of the dynamics of SRHR challenges and the need for innovative approaches in Papua.

Keywords: SRHR, young women, gender, sexuality, Papua

### Introduction

Specifically, the discussions and analyses developed in this study seek to understand at least three things. Firstly, the empirical situation regarding the dominant issues surrounding SRHR in Papua that are (still) a challenge and require continuous intervention. Secondly, preliminary data on how the map of socio-cultural problems reproduced through various forms of interaction and norm systems affect the way Papuans understand and interpret SRHR. Thirdly, how various policies/regulations work in interpreting and overcoming SRHR problems.

The urgency of exploring the issue of SRHR in Papua cannot be separated from the context after the Special Autonomy Law (*Otonomi Khusus, Otsus*) Number 21 of 2001 was enacted. The Special Autonomy Law is a special policy to improve services and accelerate development for Papuans. It can be said that the existence of the Special Autonomy Law is a new chapter that can serve as a background for (re)examining progress of development in Papua. Normatively, the Special Autonomy policy, which was followed by a number of regional expansions, contains the values of modernity - related to the acceleration of equitable development

measured through public activity-based standards, abstract systems such as education and public services, and income rationality in the wage system (Giddens 1990). In Papua, modernity, which had also gone hand in hand with the New Order concept of development, stimulated a situation that made it seem as if the local wisdom of the community was not as important as the role of the individual. This situation can be seen from the dichotomous perspective that contrasts the symbol of tradition associated with primitiveness with the openness of individuals to the influence of technology, migration, and formal education, which is considered as progress (Slama & Munro 2015). On the issue of SRHR, for example, the achievement of modernity is measured by how many women participate in family planning programmes, which is contrary to clan traditions.

However, in the post-Reformasi era, there is an idea to affirm local cultural wisdom as an indicator of development achievements. In the most recent situation in Papua, the idea of *Otsus* emerged. However, there is scepticism about the extent to which *Otsus* truly presents Indigenous Papuans as subjects to define the formulation

of the fulfilment of their human rights when the human development index is still the lowest on a national scale (Sugandi 2008). A question also arises of how to overcome the strict cultural systems and traditions that pose challenges to post-expansion institutional arrangements (Ambang 2007; Silo & Ismail 2022). Similarly, on the issue of gender mainstreaming: there is a need to ascertain what forms of advocacy on gender issues can be done and their impacts (Macintyre 2011; Susiana 2015; Lamprell & Braithwaite 2017). Specifically, in relation to reproductive health, challenges arise, such as in the strategy to reduce the Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR), Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), and Toddler Mortality Rate (TMR), which overlap with issues of unwanted pregnancy, child (female) marriage, stunting, as well as the paradox of tradition in interpreting the role and function of women's sexuality itself (Widayatun et al. 2019).

Statistically, the Public Health Development Index (*Indeks Pembangunan Kesehatan Masyarakat, IPKM*) in Papua is still the lowest, at 0.4888 (MOH 2021; Sumule et al. 2022). Likewise, the Adolescent Reproductive Health Index (*Indeks Kesehatan Reproduksi Remaja, IKRRI*) in Papua is also among the three lowest in Indonesia. Regarding the issue of sexuality, a number of previous studies have highlighted the link between the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and limited access to comprehensive knowledge on reproductive health (Butt 2015). Through the problematisation of HIV/AIDS, several studies have also found the tendency of a sexually active culture that forms an endless circle of problems. In the youth group, most of sexually active young women are reported to be unmarried and experience unwanted pregnancies (Diarsvitri et al. 2010; Butt & Munro 2007). These unintended pregnancies are then suspected to be a factor that encourages young women to practice unsafe abortion and potentially contributes to the MMR.

From a medical perspective, young pregnant women are vulnerable to malnutrition, which can then increase the risk of stunting in the children who are born (Nirmalasari 2020). These studies show that the dynamics of women's sexuality experiences, especially young women in Papua, are quite unique. On the one hand, it can be understood when unintended pregnancy becomes a problem, especially for young Papuan women, who are generally students (BPS 2022). However, sexual activity that is assumed to be high-risk implies a big question about how the experience of sexuality is interpreted by young women living in different social worlds and what the implications are. Therefore, in addition to government's archives and documents, the self-reflection of indigenous

Papuans, represented by one of the researchers, and the exploration of young Papuan women's experiences of their sexuality, such as unintended pregnancies, can be a starting point for understanding SRHR issues in the larger context of Papua.

## Research Methodology

The study developed in this article is based on a literature study, self-reflexive, and qualitative data interpretation. The literature study refers to government's archives and documents that contain aggregate information related to SRHR issues in Papua. Meanwhile, qualitative data was collected through interviews with five Indigenous Papuan women aged between 20-22 years. Three of the women were from Mappi, while the other two were from Merauke. They were students and unmarried. A narrative approach was used to place the informants' experiences as the basis of knowledge construction (Czarniawska 2004). This approach also refers to the feminist methodological tradition that places hidden transcripts of marginalised groups such as women as the basis of epistemology (Harding 1991; Haraway 1988; Hartsock 2019).

Exploration of Indigenous Papuan women's experiences related to unintended pregnancy was conducted because pregnancy is one of the authentic female bodily experiences (Dhewy 2015). Here, pregnancy is not merely interpreted as a natural, domestic, and marginalised biological event. Pregnancy is a series of socially meaningful events, where the power to navigate it is women's (bodies) (Tyler 2000; Young 2005). Therefore, methodologically, this study also borrows the concept of bodily phenomenology, which assumes that the subject's meaning of her bodily experience is shaped and influenced by her relationships with others and the particular social world situation she lives in (Merleau-Ponty 1981; Csordas 1994). Thus, the experiences of women's sexuality related to unintended pregnancy that have been "silenced" due to taboo cultural assumptions are interpreted as the main data that guide this study to better understand crucial issues related to SRHR.

Technically, the interviews were conducted in March 2023 using Indonesian and involving one researcher, who is an Indigenous Papuan. The presence of a Papuan researcher in the interview process allowed for self-reflexive behaviour to anticipate possible knowledge gaps between the researchers and informants. Conversations in the interview process were recorded and then transcribed. Furthermore, the coding stage was

carried out to categorise the findings in accordance with the fundamental questions of the study. Data analysis was done by interpreting the mapping results of informant narrative that were written verbatim. In the process of presenting and analysing this data, the development of self-reflexive method was also conducted to build contextualised interpretations.

### **Young Papuan Women and the SRHR Discourse**

This section discusses SRHR issues in general in Papua. Referring to Komnas Perempuan's framework, SRHR includes four components, namely sexual health, sexual rights, reproductive health, and reproductive rights. From a feminist perspective, issues related to SRHR are crucial because experiences of sexuality and reproduction tend to be considered part of women's natural lives as opposed to men's lives that are embedded in cultural practices (Freedman 2001). In the context of young people in Indonesia, SRHR becomes even more problematic because sexuality is considered the same as sexual activity, which seems to be only a representation of marital values - which are heteronormative, based on heterosexual perspectives - and reproductive functions (Parker 2009). This is especially true for young women, who have multiple challenges to express and articulate SRHR. In terms of norms, unmarried women are vulnerable to being labelled negatively when talking about their bodies and sexuality. This social control then affects access to information and services on SRHR for young and unmarried women (Bennett 2015).

One of the most dominant SRHR issues among young women is unintended pregnancy. This is the case in Papua. National data show that 40% of pregnancies are unwanted (BKKBN 2020). However, it is difficult to obtain accurate documentation related to unintended pregnancy specifically among young unmarried women. However, data from SDKI (2017) show that on average, first sexual intercourse occurs in the age between 15-19 years old and 7% of this age group has pregnancy experience. Meanwhile in Papua, the female fertility rate is quite high at 3.3 per cent, higher than the national average. The age of first childbirth is also quite young, around 20-21 years old (Nasida & Pramana 2019). As an issue, unintended pregnancy refers to pregnancy experienced by young women who are still in school.

In Papua, the participation of women in the 7-24 years age group in the education sector is higher than that of men at more than 60 per cent (BPS 2021). This trend in female school participation reflects a shift in gender norms in society. When referring to clan traditions such

as those in Papua, women's gender roles tend to be associated with domestic, reproductive, and parenting tasks. However, an education system that requires women to have public activities has the potential to make traditional gender roles just a spectrum. This can be seen from the fact that women can leave the house and have activities that have nothing to do with domestic routines. This is shown by the low fertility rate among women with higher education level (Nasida & Pramana 2019; SDKI 2017).

In practice, in addition to going to school, women can build friendships that also have a new influence on the way they define themselves. Here, forms of intimate relationships have also shifted, such as dating relationships. Basically, dating relationships are very different from marital relationships that are constructed in the Papuan tradition. In marriage, in general, pregnancy is interpreted as part of an effort to maintain tradition, especially related to the clan system; hence, the high fertility rate of women reflects the number of children or the close spacing of births. However, in building dating relationships, there is no image of clan reproduction. Therefore, pregnancy that occurs during the dating period among young people is more of a risk. The risk here means that the pregnancy implies various problems with other issues, such as "free sex", contraceptive, abortion, and infectious diseases. In the end, these discourses are also learned and internalised by Papuan women in general. For example, many young married mothers define their pregnancies as unintended pregnancies. On average, they do not want the pregnancies because they already have more than 2 or 3 children. The economic responsibility is heavy because their husbands do not have a permanent job (e.g., port workers). The factors that triggered the perception of an unintended pregnancy were mapped: pregnancy as a result of rape, lack of adequate knowledge of modern contraceptive, too many children, health reasons, foetal defects, young age or not ready for marriage. Other reasons include irresponsible partners, each individual is still bound by a work contract, husbands do not want to use condoms, old age, and the number of children is already quite large.

Discussions on unintended pregnancies are also intertwined with other sexuality issues such as HIV/AIDS. Papua province has the highest number of HIV infections per capita in Indonesia. Papua is ranked 3rd out of 10 provinces with the highest HIV cases. The SIHA Executive Report (2022) on the development of HIV/AIDS and *PIMS* for the third quarter of 2022 shows that during January to September, there were 2,717 new cases of people living

with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). The Merauke District Health Office (2022) reported that there were 2,704 cumulative HIV cases. The number of HIV cases in young people in Merauke Regency in 2022 aged 20-24 years was 539 cases and aged 25-49 years was 1,632 cases. Young people are vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections (STIs), the spread of HIV through sexual contact, and the use of needles.

On the other hand, the handling and management of HIV/AIDS continues to be intensified in various ways, such as socialisation to schools and campuses or to the community. There is access to testing, counselling, and treatment for HIV for those who do get tested. Infection rates are sometimes estimated at 2 to 3 per cent in the general population in Papua province. However, for Indigenous Papuans who are HIV positive, recent estimates suggest a rate of around 7 per cent. In addition, reports of HIV level remain low due to inadequate reporting mechanisms, as well as shame. Although migrants make up a larger percentage of the population, more Indigenous Papuans are affected by HIV than migrants.

The Ministry of Health's HIV/AIDS Information System (SIHA) report (2017) on the HIV/AIDS Control Programme and PIMS shows that HIV prevalence among Indigenous Papuans is almost twice as high as among migrants. This is not only true in mountainous areas, but also in coastal areas. The situation is further complicated by other issues, such as limited access to ARV treatment, support, and medication. Various efforts since the early 2000s across Indonesia to make ARV treatment and testing more available have not been optimised. Services are still hampered by corruption, lack of mentoring, and inadequate training. Medicines to treat HIV, which should be free, are in fact available in certain places where people with HIV/AIDS are asked to pay a certain amount of money. Medicines are not always available. ARV drugs have been available on a regular basis in the main coastal districts since 2007, and have been available on a regular basis in the mountainous districts since 2008. Despite the availability of drugs, utilisation remains low (reflection of Indigenous Papuan researcher).

Another group that is highly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS in Papua is housewives, particularly Indigenous Papuan women. Housewives can be a vulnerable group to contracting HIV/AIDS. Generally, they are infected with HIV/AIDS from their husbands, who have sexual relations with multiple partners. In addition, the vulnerability of HIV and AIDS transmission in women is caused by the lack of information about reproductive rights and sexual rights

for women. The lack of knowledge and awareness of HIV/AIDS among housewives further facilitates transmission.

Gender inequality and injustice also lead to unequal relations between husbands and wives so that women cannot refuse or cannot ask their husbands to use contraceptives when forcing unsafe sexual relations. Women also cannot refuse sexual intercourse even if they know their husbands have relationships with other women outside the marriage. In certain conditions, the infection of housewives with HIV/AIDS is a potential sexual violence against women, especially in households that have the opportunity to be exposed to sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. There are at least two fundamental reasons that make women who experience sexual violence vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. First, socio-cultural factors. It is difficult for women to refuse sexual relations with their partners because women do not have the skills to suggest the use of contraceptives in sexual relations. The taboo factor of talking about sexual activity, reproductive health, and other information makes it difficult for women to discuss the issue of sexual activity with their partners. Furthermore, it is difficult for women to take quick actions to access treatment for sexual diseases that they already suffer. The second reason is economic factors. Women are generally very economically dependent on men. This causes women to have no bargaining power to refuse sexual relations with their partners.

### **Exploring the Meanings and Implications of SRHR Issues among Indigenous Young Papuan Women**

This section presents data based on interviews conducted with young Papuan women regarding their perceptions and experiences of SRHR. The topic of domestic violence was used as the main trigger because empirically, the issue is quite close to the informants' daily lives. The following are the dominant narratives that emerge when indigenous Papuan women specifically discuss domestic violence. The data presented in this section are informant testimonies, which are then interpreted and analysed sequentially.

#### *Young Women as Sexual Beings as well as Sexual Objects*

The narratives often conveyed by young Papuan women are that they often encounter cases of unintended pregnancy. All informants stated that in their schools, there were always students who experienced pregnancy and were still allowed to attend school. Even though it was perceived as a problem, the presence of pregnant students at school triggered the assumption

that unintended pregnancies among young women were common. As the following informant said:

“It is common (to see pregnant students at school). It is most dominant in high schools. There are some in junior high schools but not too many. There are also cases in elementary schools, but not as many as in high schools. Some of my friends who are pregnant are still told to go to school; the teachers were aware, but they allowed them go and take the exams until they finish” (MG 2023, Interview 4 March).

The same is true among peers. There were informants who witnessed attempts by some students to modify the way they wore their uniforms so that their pregnancy could be hidden. However, the traces of pregnancy from the growing belly were visible. This phenomenon is also not interpreted as an uncommon event:

“At that time, there was one schoolmate. When we participated in UKOM at SMA 1, she was already pregnant, already 5 months old. So, her belly was already visible; she was in the third year of a health vocational school. There were two people, not one. When we finished school, they had already given birth and had husbands, but they continued to go to school because the school exams were approaching. (They) managed to hide (their pregnancies) because their stomachs were still small. One of the pregnancies was only one month old. The 4-month-old’s belly was not visible, but she always said she was fat. We knew because when she graduated, her stomach was already big, so we found out when she graduated. They always wore thick hoodie jackets or (wore) them upside down, with their hands in their pockets. They wore big skirts and uniforms, so it was not very visible” (MB 2023, Interview 4 March).

When asked about the relationship between unintended pregnancy and sexual behaviour that may involve violence, there were quite diverse answers. Although it is undeniable that the trend of violence against women is also high, all informants explained that young people’s dating relationships are consensual. This is characterised, for example, by the rarity of reports of alleged violence experienced by women in their dating relationships. In cases of unintended pregnancy, parental anger is not necessarily a sign that there is coercion in the dating relationship. As stated by one of the informants:

“I have never heard of this case (unintended pregnancy) being reported to the police. But the boyfriend was beaten by his family, but it ended in peace. In the end, they went backstreet and started dating again” (MG 2023, Interview 4 March).

However, in discussing the forms and dynamics of dating relationships related to age gap, there is

information that indicates various forms of inequality. For example, two informants stated that the boyfriends of high school girls who experienced unintended pregnancies in Merauke usually dated *angkot* drivers, who were much older. They said that the high school women did not seem to feel forced even though their male partners were much older:

“There were also drivers who were beaten up for impregnating or taking the (teenage girl) away for up to 3 days. But it was not reported to the police because it was consensual, and we had no evidence that it was coercion” (PM 2023, Interview 5 March).

Meanwhile, when asked to what extent the young women understood risky sexual behaviour and consent-based relationships, all informants agreed that their knowledge was very limited. There are different narratives between dating relationships and sexual behaviour while dating. In the context of sexual behaviour, there were also stories of sexual relationships initiated through threats of violence from men, for example:

“Threats are the most important factor in Mappi. Sometimes he came to school or sometimes he could go as far as, uhm, cutting them to death. Sometimes threatened with a machete. My sister was once killed. She wanted to break up because she did not want to have sexual intercourse; she was beaten in front of the school too” (PM 2023, Interview 6 March).

There were also instances that reflected a process of persuasion that normalised the narrative shift from rejection to acceptance, for example:

“Usually, he said he will take responsibility (if sexual intercourse resulting in pregnancy). (Women) were seduced. They fell for their words. I will take responsibility” (GK 2023, Interview 6 March).

Meanwhile, in relation to knowledge about anticipating risky behaviours, they were familiar with contraceptive terms and methods. However, they did not have enough skills to articulate the need to avoid unintended pregnancy through the use of contraceptives.

“I never learned about contraceptive in junior high school. Neither in high school. Not sure about now. But for those of us who graduated in 2016, it did not exist, but now it seems it does. After the HIV rate is high in high school students, it has been socialised to high school students. In 2016, there was (socialisation) about the use of contraceptives, early marriage, prevention, and all that. It was limited to explaining contraceptives, not explaining how to make the men want to use them and what to do if they do not want to use them. It was limited” (GK 2023, Interview 6 March).

In some educational institutions, contraceptive socialisation is provided, but it does not discuss the underlying issue of how to discuss the need for contraceptive with a partner who may be more dominant. Often, contraceptive socialisation overlaps with sexual abstinence-based education:

“On campus, PKKMB introduces safety sex too, but not how to communicate it. Usually it is like “hold on, wait until you get marriage first”, so do not have pre-marital sex. Healthy dating should not lead to sex, you will get pregnant outside of marriage, shame” (SK 2023, Interview 4 March).

The narratives that emerged around the experiences of dating conveyed by the informants confirm previous studies that trends in the sexual behaviour of pre-marital youth in Indonesia are a form of their existence as sexual beings (Holzner & Oetomo 2004). However, sexuality is generally seen through the lens of moral panic and is thus interpreted as a perversion (Parker 2008) that requires certain discipline. Furthermore, gender norms also work to forbid all forms of narrative related to women’s sexuality so that even though both have the same potential as sexual beings, women’s articulative spaces are more limited.

In the context of Papua, sexuality and the continuity of the clan is a stability that must be maintained; hence, pregnancy and birth are signs and moments that determine the ability of a family to comply with tradition. However, because patriarchal ideology is part of the formation of the norm system, the burden of reproduction seems to be the responsibility of women. Moreover, women’s bodies are only meaningful as biological objects, which initially are only for reproductive purposes and then widen to all dimensions related to sexuality and intimacy-based relationships. In dating relationships, as stated by the informants, women’s willingness to undergo dating relationships is often considered the same as consent to become sexual objects for their male partners. This assumption is also normalised through the control or discipline exercised by men, such as giving threats if women do not want to have sexual intercourse. Likewise, when an unintended pregnancy occurs, the community does not see it as a risk that can jeopardise women’s reproductive health because pregnancy is a symbol of the continuation of the clan system. It can be said that the role of women and their sexuality is actually recognised but at the same time ignored (Gina & Arivia 2016). However, in the context of Papua, the paradox between knowledge about SRHR and the culture that shapes the aspiration about pregnancy is a fundamental challenge, so that on the one hand, women recognise

their need to be in dating relationships. They do not have a cultural system that gives them the opportunity and space to voice their rejection of risky relationships. As the informants also said, women tend to find it difficult to communicate the need to use contraceptives despite this knowledge.

### *Intimacy, Affection, and Economic Issues*

Exploration of Indigenous Papuan women’s perceptions of the issue of unwanted pregnancy is also related to their knowledge of the motives of most young women in dating. There is a strong link between economic motives and the willingness of women to have relationships with older or even married men. In the cases in Merauke, the informants said that most women dated *angkot* drivers to reduce transport costs. As one informant put it:

“They are dating so that the *angkot* ride is free. They are picked up because (their house) is far away. Most are much older and could be someone’s husband” (SK 2023, Interview 7 March).

The phenomenon of sex workers and their vulnerabilities is also common knowledge. As one informant pointed out, in the context of Papua, many sex workers come from the lower middle class. They are on average paid cheaply and do not have the power to negotiate their needs regarding contraceptives, so in addition to being trapped in the poverty circle, the risk of HIV/AIDS is also part of the daily lives of these sex workers.

“(I have) experience living in a complex in Merauke, which has a localisation called “floating hotels”. It is always crowded there - people whose activities are around the harbour, especially young people, who work unloading ship cargos, maybe if they have money they go there. This phenomenon confirms why HIV/AIDS has the highest rate of young married couples and young women. (They) have no knowledge about contraceptive. There is even neighbour’s friend, whose children are still in high school. He said it was cheap (sex worker services) there. I heard that the women are in their 30s and older, so that is why the rates are cheap” (MG 2023, Interview 4 March).

Economic issues are also part of the experience that is quite influential on the sexuality of young Papuan women. Family economic difficulties “force” girls in Papua to work with their parents. Instead of playing with their peers, their childhood is spent with activities such as going to work in the forest or agricultural areas. Public activities such as going to school become an alternative space for those who are distant from economic activities

that are considered not in line with their aspirations as young people. For example:

"Maybe it is, *uhm*, because we have a childhood that is different from children in general. A childhood in which maybe (we) still want to play and others. We have been taught to do such work since childhood. We cannot be free, we cannot (because) there is work (that) we have to finish. If we do not finish it ... we cannot go out. Usually, once we are away from our parents (such as school), it feels like we want to be free" (MB 2023, Interview 7 March).

The issue of poverty, which makes the kinship system the support of daily economic activities, causes a rejection in the children's group. They consider the parenting system to be too harsh, which justifies the girls' need to substitute their affection for friendships and dating outside the home. For example:

"Lack of support from the family. For example, she (the girl) wants to go to this school, but the parents do not support it, so the girl is discouraged. Then she turns to relationships. She looks for support, which can be in the form of economics, it can also be affection like from parents"" (MG 2023, Interview 10 March).

The situation of poverty is also illustrated through the disconnect between children's and parents' perspectives on educational attainment and the necessary support facilities. For example, cases of school children receiving scholarships or economic assistance for school. As stated by the informants, some parents consider various types of assistance, such as school scholarships, as a solution that frees them from economic responsibility for their children. This view differs from the reality experienced by the children because the educational assistance provided does not mean that they can fulfil their daily needs completely. This discrepancy creates conflict between parents and children and many children, especially girls, try to utilise their dating relationships to channel economic resources that are not available to them from their parents. For example:

"Some of them get scholarships, such as Bidik Misi. The parents think that all their needs have been covered by the campus, while the campus only provides tuition fees and stipends per three months. It is like the parents are completely hands off because (their children) have received the scholarship. Sometimes that makes them stressed too because there are other needs, such as photocopying and others. Because they do not go to their parents, they end up going to their boyfriends. Transactional economics again. Our parents have an elementary to junior high school background. Many of their jobs are also farmers and fishermen. So (they) cannot understand the world of children who go to university" (SK 2023, Interview 4 March).

The narrative of poverty, which is one of the triggers of the circle of powerlessness in women's groups, is also reflected in their difficulty in being able to perform vertical mobility through education. It is not easy for women to attend higher education because of the high costs involved. The informants explained that there is no university in their area, so if they want to go to higher education, they have to live in the "city", which of course is not cheap.

"It's difficult sister, to go to college is difficult. Because most of our parents are farmers, so support for children's education is limited, let alone to send them to university. There is also no university in Mappi, so you have to go to Merauke. There are parents who cannot let go of their children because of the cost. Parents sometimes prefer their children to go straight to work so they can earn money" (GK 2023, Interview 6 March).

The informants' experiences show that poverty, child labour, and sexuality are still a triangle of interrelated issues in Papua. A study conducted by the ILO (2011) states that the factors that cause girls to be trapped in the sex industry ring are parents' separation and family economic limitations. Studies conducted in other parts of Indonesia also show that the sex industry that ensnares minors is a result of a combination of different factors, such as poverty, inequality, consumerism, gender discrimination, violence against women, and the low status of girls (Wicaksono 2020).

In the Papuan context, poverty initially led parents to ask their children to help them in the forest or on farms. However, this practice then becomes a justification that everyone can work even from childhood. Therefore, there will often be tensions between parents and children. As informants pointed out, there is a disconnect when economic dynamics operate in two different realms. For children, the economic challenges faced by students, especially women, are very different from the dynamics of fulfilling daily needs at the family level. Under certain conditions, girls are conditioned to find their own solutions to fulfil their aspirations, which seem different from what their parents understand. On the other hand, as mentioned above, the role of women's sexuality has also been reduced to only be seen as a means of reproduction and then a sexual object. Consequently, for girls who enter the labour sector at an early age, sex transactions can be considered an option. The problem is that in these transactions, the position of women is increasingly marginalised. Power relations are getting stronger and suppressing women's authority over their own bodies. On the ground of economic interests, women are increasingly unable to

negotiate whether sex transactions, whether under the pretext of dating relationships or pure prostitution, can be conducted without risks, such as unintended pregnancy, contracting HIV/AIDS, and others.

### *The Shifting Norm System around Women" Bodies and Sexuality*

The bodies and sexuality of Indigenous Papuan women are still entangled in norms and stigma. Community perception of norms that are intertwined with culture indirectly regulate various behaviours surrounding their bodies and sexuality. There is a close relationship between the norms prevailing in society and sexuality behaviour. There are other issues related to the narratives of sexuality that are reproduced in the family sphere. The objectification of women's sexuality seems to have an impact on the extent of the transfer of reproductive health knowledge from parents to their children. On the one hand, family can be a space to regulate and organise the satisfaction of sexual desires (Hunt 1984). However, family spaces that allow for the expression of sexuality are quite limited. As told by one informant, dating is prohibited.

"Normally, when we enter puberty, we are already familiar with that kind of thing (dating) and it is normal. But the parents do not seem to understand. Anyway, they do not let us go; they are afraid that if we date, there will be things like that (unintended pregnancy, STIs, etc.). We cannot do that, we cannot do this. So, we go out secretly in my experience" (GK 2023, Interview 4 March).

The limitations of space and relationship that allow for conversations about sexuality have widened to the public sphere, such as schools. Issues around sexuality seem taboo to talk about even though the practice of "free sex" is quite massive. The informants stated that they were embarrassed to talk about topics around sexuality.

"Embarrassed. Especially if it is discussed. There is (a discussion of) female genitalia and then male genitalia, so they are embarrassed. For them it is not important. Actually, maybe it is not wrong, but it feels too funny to say. If we were given socialisation and then shown the tools (genitals), friends would all laugh. But at my school at that time, most of the people who laughed during the socialisation were boys" (MG 2023, Interview 6 March).

The funny and unimportant narrative arises because they do not have enough knowledge about sexuality. The turmoil of puberty and sexual desire that they feel coupled with a lack of knowledge, makes them curious and want to try things out without knowing the risks.

"Maybe it is more about curiosity. Trials and errors. Other than that, it is like wanting to learn, wanting to try new things, and maybe wanting to find yourself" (SK 2023, Interview 4 March).

The seemingly taboo topic and the education that is limited to the outer layer are also related to the feeling of discomfort in thinking about or discussing contraceptives. One informant gave the following information:

"I was embarrassed to buy (condoms) at the pharmacy because I was still in high school. Because if you buy it, people think you must be married. The problem is that we have a lot of friends. If it is a boy who buys, the person at the pharmacy must know that they want to have (sexual) intercourse. Yes, it is like we are still shy about it. It is a taboo, so just have sex without a condom" (PM 2023, Interview 10 March).

This problem is compounded by the negative labelling of teenage girls who engage in sexual relations without marriage. On the one hand, sexual intercourse without contraceptives poses a risk of unintended pregnancies and STIs. The informants stated that these women were labelled as "flirty" and "brutal". Here is the narrative:

"They know that there is a risk, but maybe it is just because they are flirty. (Unintended pregnancy) is actually not unusual, but still gets a bad stigma. Labelled as the "brutal" one (MB 2023, Interview 6 March).

Negative labelling is not necessarily born from moral discourse. The diction about unintended pregnancy emerged from women who experienced the risk of pregnancy when they were in dating relationships at a young age. This is shown by the experience of abortion. For example:

"They are used to do that, they used to take drugs carelessly. Young pineapples, they used to tell their friends to step on their stomachs. Yes, they still got pregnant. (They take) any drugs. They will mix them up actually. They also did not tell us that they wanted to abort the pregnancy. In the end, they found their own drugs and experimented" (MG 2023, Interview 4 March).

However, when asked about the situation after a failed abortion, the informants explained that the children born from the miscarriage would be cared for by the parents of the young women. It can be said that there is a gap between the generally constructed meaning of pregnancy in Papuan society and what is perceived by women who are exposed to modern values such as education.

As explained earlier, pregnancy is a sign of fertility and the preservation of civilisation. Thus, in the family sphere, conversations about sexuality seem to be taboo. It is actually considered a natural issue that is not important to discuss openly because of its clear function as a reproductive medium. However, the issue becomes different when pregnancy occurs in the body of a woman who not only reproduces the domestic role but also the public role of modern society, namely as a student. In this context, pregnancy is not only related to the meaning of reproduction. But pregnancy can be a threatening event because the whole set of reproductive activities cannot be done simultaneously when these young women have to study, go to school, and hang out with their peers. Modern institutions such as schools also have initiatives to provide knowledge about reproductive health. However, because gender issues and women's experience of sexuality are situational (Moi 1999; Tyler 2000), the approach to reproductive health education cannot be generalised from one to another. In the context of Papua, the knowledge gap between what is reproduced in the cultural realm and what is to be voiced in the spaces of modernisation needs to be unravelled first. Sexuality education, which is assumed to discuss sexual desire so that adolescents are able to build subjectivity and responsibility as sexual beings (Fine & McClelland 2006), is counterproductive to efforts to alleviate marginalised groups such as Indigenous Papuan women from the snares of injustice.

## Closing

Departing from the reading of documents and empirical narratives delivered by young Papuan women, a number of challenges that must be faced in fulfilling SRHR in the Papua region were found. How patriarchy has created hierarchical relations on issues surrounding sexuality is not the only issue that is always associated with women and natural law. The way patriarchy works in the Papuan context is quite complex because of its intersection with the legacy of traditions that have existed for a long time and the Special Autonomy agenda that is packaged in a modernisation discourse that relatively reproduces the principle of universality. Basically, the visible situation that occurs in Papua is the high rate of unintended pregnancy, which is in line with active sexual behaviour among young people. However, the problem is that the term unintended pregnancy arises because there is a perception that pregnancy does not always mean reproductive achievement alone. Unintended pregnancy means risks, threats, and problems that must

be avoided. Because pregnancy is an inherent event in women's bodies, unintended pregnancy becomes an issue that makes women vulnerable as victims. Because pregnancy is an event that is inherent in the female body, KTD means issues that make women vulnerable as victims. Structurally, it can be interpreted that patriarchal power, which constructs culture through the discourse of power and knowledge, shapes sexual discourse (Foucault 1983) so that it can control women's sexuality. From the perspective of feminism, young women who have unintended pregnancy experience multiple losses because they lose their bodily autonomy and sexuality.

Contextually, however, clan-based kinship traditions essentially place sexuality, women's bodies, and reproduction as a single defining variable. It is embedded in a patriarchal ideology that interprets the entire experience of female sexuality in the paradigm of femininity. This perspective creates varied forms of hierarchy in line with the various domains that women occupy. In the economic sphere, women's sexuality is used to establish transactional relationships, both overtly and overlapping with the term dating relationships.

Likewise, in the realm of education, comprehensive narratives and socialisation seem difficult to convey. At first glance, this could be described as a cultural taboo phenomenon. However, unlike other regions, taboos in the Papuan context do not work through disciplinary mechanisms such as shame or embarrassment because stories of active sexual activity among young people or the presence of pregnant students in Papuan schools are easily available. In the tradition of Papuan society, sexuality is interpreted as the same as sex, which is natural because it was originally for the sake of clan reproduction. This is where there is a gap between the knowledge internalised through tradition and the skills to explain sexuality issues in terms of risks constructed by the logic of modern society. In other words, there is a discontinuity in the structure of modernity/development in Papua itself. In the lives of young women, the input of knowledge about SRHR, which previously only relied on socialisation/learning at the family/community/customary level, has shifted to modern educational institutions (schools). However, in its implementation, there are no mechanisms and facilities that are sufficient to answer the complexity of the problems of young women themselves.

Finally, this study notes the opportunity to further explore SRHR problems using an intersectionality approach. Mapping specific issues that contribute to sexuality problems that are considered risky needs to be

done. In feminist studies, the intersectionality approach is used to unravel the layers of oppression experienced by marginalised groups such as women because gender issues never stand alone. Gender issues always intersect with other aspects, such as social class, customary systems, and certain cultural norms to form structures that are oppressive to women (Crenshaw 1991).

This is also the case at the praxis level. There needs to be a specific intervention that adapts to the aspects of intersection that occur in Papua so that some materials and methods of sexuality education may be different from other regions. Some aspects that need to be managed include poverty issues, intergenerational knowledge gaps, and the clash of tradition with present values in interpreting women's sexuality.

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