

Results of a Contextual Scoping Study: Indonesia

Locally published data about sexuality

A full literature search was conducted and the results are presented in two bibliographies: one contains details of literature published in English and the other of literature published in Bahasa Indonesia. Both bibliographies can be downloaded from the resources page of sexualitystudies.net. Since the amount of materials was large, anything older than 1990 was excluded. Where available, web links for document download are included. It should be noted that while these listings are extensive, they are not exhaustive.

In brief, a number of authors from a variety of disciplines and perspectives stand out for their large contribution to the literature in the field of sexuality studies in Indonesia. Regarding issues associated with sexual orientation and gay/lesbian culture, the writings of Tom Boellstorff, Dede Oetomo, Saskia Wieringa, and Evelyn Blackwood are numerous and significant. Regarding sexuality and the state, nation and society, the writings of the feminist scholar Julia Suryakusuma (who writes in both English and Indonesian) and Hatib Abdul Kadir Olong, Moh Yasir Alimi, and Muhadjir Darwin are prominent, as well as Benedict Anderson whose works sometimes touch on sexuality. Key writers and/or activists in relation to women's rights, status, health and sexuality include Ninuk Widyantoro, Linda R. Bennet, Alison J. Murray (especially regarding sex workers), Helen Creese, Balinese poet-activist Cok Sawitri, Ford Foundation representative Meiwita Budiharsana, and Terry Hull of ANU. Research relating to sexuality issues in connection with HIV/AIDS and STDs has been published by Elisabeth Pisani, Kathleen Ford, M.R. Joesoef, Peter Fajans, D.N. Wirawan, I.M. Setiawan, Endang R. Sedyaningsih-Mamahit and Barbara Reed, among others. Regarding youth and sexuality, writings by Laurike Moeliono and Iwu D. Utomo are notable, as is the work of Dr. Oka Negara and others working in the field of adolescent sexual and reproductive health in Indonesia. For an interesting description and analysis of how cultural issues are associated with sexuality, one can examine articles published in *Latitudes* magazine (Bali, 2001-2005), *Inside Indonesia*, and *The Jakarta Post*, as well as in the Indonesian language (*Bahasa Indonesia*) media, such as *Tempo* and *Suara Pembaharuan* (print and online). Popular Indonesian non-fiction books with sexual themes have been written by Moamar Emka and Iip Wijayanto, among others. The films of Garin Nugroho and Nia Dinata are notable for pushing forward social issues including those related to sexuality, and a variety of novelists, poets and playwrights in Indonesia, including many young women writers, are producing fictional works that explore sexual themes. Documenting these creative works, as well as poetry, paintings, photography, dance and songs, was beyond the scope of the present study.

Common themes in writing on sexuality in Indonesia include:

- *Waria* (transvestites-transgendered males), and gay and lesbian subculture.
- Women's sexuality and reproductive rights.

- Religious issues related to male and female circumcision, polygamy, position on abortion, marital rape, sex outside of/before marriage, homosexuality, and use of the Muslim headscarf etc.
- Pornography, especially the draft parliamentary anti-pornography bill which has elicited extensive debate and protest as it has gone through various phases of revision over the last few years.
- Sexy clothing and dancing in communities and in the media.
- High risk behaviours and the spread of HIV/AIDS and STDs.
- Commercial sex workers and their clients.
- Sex tourism and trafficking.
- Paedophilia, sexual abuse and violence against women.
- The use of penile enhancements and sexual stimulants.
- Sexuality in ancient documents of Indonesian history and literature.
- Sexuality in various ethnic groups and indigenous tribes.

Socio-Political Context: Mapping Current Local Issues in Relation to Sexuality.

Several experts whose work relates to sexuality in Indonesia were contacted for their opinion on the most significant current issues and challenges in the field. Some responses included:

- 1) Religious constructions of sexuality being imposed on the population (e.g., condemnation of homosexuality).
- 2) Poverty forcing earlier sexual maturity and marriage among girls, allowing males additional time for education and achievement, leading to higher rates of divorce and leaving women in vulnerable positions in society.
- 3) Norms of sexuality are based on traditional Javanese middle-class gender roles and ideals.
- 4) Muslim law being exploited in regional politics in Indonesia to control women's sexuality (i.e., requirements to cover the body and head).
- 5) Problems with access to information and services for the majority of the Indonesian population.
- 6) The current draft anti pornography law is aimed at controlling women's sexuality and domestication.
- 7) The public and government have little understanding of LGBT issues.

Some main national Indonesian language newspapers and magazines were selected in the search for sexuality related topics in the media. Initially, the selection was made based on the popularity of these newspapers and magazines at the national level and also because they have been known to publish materials related to sexuality in the past, particularly those with a sociological and cultural analytic perspective. The final selected Indonesian articles analysed in this contextual scoping study are from [Kompas](#), [Koran Tempo](#), [Suara Pembaharuan](#), [Media Indonesia](#), [Detiknews](#) (all national newspapers), [Lampung Post](#) (a regional newspaper), and the magazines [Tempo](#) and [Gatra](#). It should be noted that only one regional newspaper, [Lampung Post](#) in Sumatera, was found to publish an article with decent analysis on sexuality and Islam. At least ten other regional newspapers were also searched but no sexuality-related articles, beyond the arrests of street prostitutes etc., were found.

The Indonesian language newspapers and magazines (especially *Koran Tempo*, *Tempo Magazine* and *Suara Pembaharuan*), and the English language [Jakarta Post](#), have published various articles that provide analysis on sexuality from cultural and sociological perspectives. The arguments presented in their articles in general acknowledge that sexuality can be found in all aspects of society. These articles collectively present opinions and academic analysis from many prominent cultural and sociological intellectuals in Indonesia, and also present interesting coverage by investigative journalists. *Koran Tempo*, *Tempo Magazine*, *Media Indonesia*, *Gatra Magazine* and *Suara Pembaharuan* all seem to promote the type of writings which discuss sexuality beyond simply religious and legal/policing issues, which is what most local and religiously-affiliated newspapers limit themselves to.

Koran Tempo and *Tempo Magazine* (owned by the same company and founded by the well known writer Gunawan Mohammad) in particular regularly publish articles related to sexuality, spread throughout a number of their sections (ideas, opinions, politics, book reviews and culture). The Tempo media often publish provocative articles (usually in the culture section); including those written by Muslim scholars advocating sexual rights of minority groups such as sex workers and LGBT people. The proliferation of sexual rights articles published by *Tempo* and *Suara Pembaharuan* peaked during the most heated period of debate in 2004 about the parliament's controversial anti-pornography and porno-action draft bill (*RUU APP*) which is advocated by fundamentalist Muslim groups. Both publications put forward a series of articles written by moderate and liberal Muslim scholars challenging the legitimacy of the Qur'anic interpretation used as a rationale for the draft bill, primarily aimed at controlling the way womens' bodies must be covered in public. Recent articles in *Tempo* and *Suara Pembaharuan* also explicitly describe the way the definition of sexuality (seksualitas) is associated with social class and values. For example, Dawam Raharjo, one of the most esteemed Muslim scholars from Muhammadiyah (Indonesia's second largest Muslim organisation, after NU, known for its rather conservative views), in his article in *Koran Tempo* newspaper suggested a compromise for working with the sexuality issues that have been presented in a skewed way, and misrepresented as pornography. He suggested that proper education on human sexuality in the mainstream education system will help the society to construct its perceptions of sexuality in a way that does not have to oppress women and certain minority groups.

The infamous *RUU APP*, which has now been renamed the pornography bill and is still being revised and considered, also generated debate about the intersection between politics and sexuality. Many opinions, editorials and analyses published in newspapers and magazines argued that the draft bill is a political manoeuvre being pushed at the expense of restricting certain parts of human sexuality, and especially controlling women. Many articles suggested that this political move, by the supporters of the newly-elected president Susilo Bambang Yodhoyono (representing fundamentalist Muslim groups in the parliament), capitalised on the appeal of the anti-pornography issue, casting pornography and a whole laundry-list of related items as a national moral degradation requiring new regulation. The newspaper and magazine reports during this anti pornographic draft bill debate suggested that the government was attempting to define and control sexuality. During this debate, many newspaper articles quoted the president and his ministers commenting about Indonesian religion-based standards of moral decency. For example, Detiknews.com published a report about the president's request to the TV stations not to air programs showing women's belly buttons. Further, during this same period Detiknews.com

summarised the public debate about the sexual orientation of the characters of the popular children's TV program "Teletubbies".

Another popular national newspaper, *Kompas*, and some women's magazines (e.g., *Femina*, *Nova*, etc.), do not present any analysis of sexuality from social, cultural or political perspectives, but they do open up discussions about sexuality from the perspective of sexology and individual relationships/communication. Articles pertinent to sexology from these newspapers and magazines tend to be excerpted into individuals' blog sites, labelled as sexuality information. These publications also manage online discussion groups where readers can post their comments about 'seksualitas' (which in Indonesian refers to both sexology and sexuality). Almost all sexology articles published receive comments from significant numbers of readers. In many ways, sexology articles provide generic information about one aspect of sexuality for Indonesians at the individual level, such as sexual anatomy, puberty, sexual intercourse, sexual dysfunction, and others. Sexuality information wrapped in sexology language – tending towards medical language – eases the moral value judgements that often make it difficult for Indonesians to initiate sexually related discussions in public.