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- Editorial
- ▶ Research Paper
- Case Study
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## Predictors of Cybersex Behavior among College Students in Karawang Indonesia

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This article contributes to:



Model		Coefficients <sup>a</sup>		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
		Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	31.863	6.606		4.832	.000
	Self-Control (X1)	-.177	.103	-.082	-1.662	.097
	Loneliness (X2)	.637	.099	.360	6.403	.000
	Psychological Distress (X3)	.058	.106	.031	.548	.084
	Emotional Maturity (X4)	.115	.045	.126	2.567	.011

### Highlights:

- Cybersex is a series of activities that individuals engage in to access sexual content in the form of text or audiovisual using the internet and a computer
- Self-control has a significant influence on cybersex behaviour
- There are various forms of cybersex behavior which include accessing pornography on the internet through sexual images, videos, erotic stories, films, and online games

### Abstract

The aim of this research is to examine the roles of loneliness, psychological distress, emotional maturity, and self-control as predictors of cybersex behavior among college students in Karawang, Indonesia. The research method used in this research is an associative quantitative approach with the convenience sampling technique, which selects 349 college students in Karawang who meet the research characteristics as respondents. The data collection in this research was conducted using five Likert-scale models, which are self-control, loneliness, psychological distress, emotional maturity, and cybersex behavior scales. The data analysis in this research utilizes the hypothesis testing of multiple linear regression analysis. Based on the data analysis results, it is indicated that each predictor partially plays a role in cybersex behavior. Furthermore, loneliness, psychological distress, emotional maturity, and self-control collectively also play a role as predictors of cybersex behavior among college students in Karawang, Indonesia, with an influence of 16.8%.

**Keywords:** Cybersex, Self-control, Loneliness, Psychological distress, Emotional maturity

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## 1. Introduction

The use of the internet in Indonesia has been increasing every year. Based on a survey by the Association of Internet Service Providers in Indonesia (APJII), data shows that in 2017, there were 143.26 million internet users in Indonesia out of a total population of 262 million people. In 2018, the number of internet users in Indonesia increased to 171.17 million people out of a total population of 264.16 million people. In 2019-2020, there were 196.71 million internet users in Indonesia out of a total population of 266.91 million people. Based on spatial distribution, Java Island is still the largest region for internet users in Indonesia, accounting for 56.4% of total internet users, followed by users in Sumatra Island at 22.1%, Sulawesi Island at 7%, Kalimantan Island at 6.3%, Bali and Nusa Tenggara at 5.2%, and lastly Maluku and Papua at only 3%. Furthermore, in Java Island itself, West Java is ranked first in having the largest internet users at 13.2% [1].

Like any other technology, the internet has both positive and negative sides. In addition to providing information for the education sector, serving as a medium for entertainment, facilitating individuals in socializing, and being a tool that makes communication easier, the internet can also contain various negative information. The internet world can present various types of deviant activities that violate norms but are easily accessible freely, and one of these deviant activities is the use of the internet to access pornographic sites or commonly referred to as cybersex [2].

Cybersex is a series of activities that individuals engage in to access sexual content in the form of text or audiovisual using the internet and a computer. The sexual content is obtained through certain software or websites, which aim to display sexual actors to increase the user's sexual desire [3]. There are various forms of cybersex behavior which include accessing pornography on the internet through sexual images, videos, erotic stories, films, and online games [4]. Therefore, it can be concluded that cybersex behavior refers to all activities related to pornography such as viewing or engaging in sexual activities with a partner, which are carried out in the virtual world. In addition, other activities such as downloading photos or videos with sexual content to be viewed offline, selling or sharing them with others, and even seeking partners to engage in sexual chat or video are also considered cybersex behaviors.

The effort to access pornography has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2022. Pornhub explained that there was an increase in accessing the pornography they provided by 11.6% in March 2020 [5]. Engaging in sexual behavior through phone sex is the most commonly performed sexual activity. Phone sex itself is a conversation about sex conducted by at least two people [6].

The reason why someone engages in phone sex is due to curiosity and loneliness, and the impact of phone sex is addiction and social isolation. Individuals engage in cybersex behavior to fill their free time, seek pleasure by accessing websites or applications that facilitate communication with others without direct contact, and express whatever they want without fear of rejection. They also engage in cybersex to avoid the need to develop deep relationships with people around them. Therefore, cybersex perpetrators are often individuals who experience deep loneliness [7].

Loneliness is a subjective experience of individuals regarding feelings of loss and isolation, marked by a gap between what is experienced and what is desired by the individual in their personal relationships. In addition to loneliness, Depression and stress are major factors in the development of cybersex use. Psychological distress or distress is something that has negative effects on individuals, so there needs to be strong prevention of the emergence of distress in individuals to prevent the continued occurrence of cybersex behavior. Psychological distress can arise from anxiety, sadness, anger, self-awareness, emotional vulnerability related to morbidity, decreased quality of life, shortened lifespan, and increased use of health services [8].

Furthermore, another factor that causes cybersex behavior is due to individuals' inability to control their emotions or feelings. When individuals cannot control their emotions well, they will also have difficulty in choosing what to do. The inability to control, regulate, and manage emotions greatly affects the ability to make appropriate decisions and exhibit wise behavior according to one's developmental stage, including in the area of sexuality [9].

Individuals in the developmental phase are usually difficult to control and tend to have low self-control, especially regarding their sexual urges [10]. Therefore, at this stage, individuals become very susceptible to accessing sexual content, including engaging in cybersex behavior. Based on the description above, the researcher is interested in further exploring the influence of loneliness, psychological distress, emotional maturity, and self-control on cybersex behavior among college students in Karawang.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Loneliness and Cybersex Behavior

Loneliness is a mental and emotional state characterized by a feeling of being isolated. Loneliness can occur when an individual feels a mismatch between what they expect from their interpersonal relationships and the reality of their life, resulting in them feeling lonely and alone [11]. Loneliness is a subjective experience of something unpleasant that occurs when an individual's social relationships do not meet their needs or desires, either in terms of quality or quantity.

In terms of developmental tasks, college students experience urges and interests in sex as well as curiosity about sex. One of the issues is the increasing sexual needs, in which the sexual needs not only increase but also require sexual gratification that can be obtained from various sources, one of which is through the internet [12]. To fulfill this need, college students search for sexual content or sexual partners on the internet. In addition, the internet is used as a way for someone to compensate for the loneliness they are feeling. Individuals engage in online sexual behavior to relieve their stress, at least they engage in cybersex as an escape from the boredom, loneliness, and emptiness they experience. Therefore, the first hypothesis in this research is: H1: There is a role of loneliness as a predictor of cybersex behavior among students in Karawang.

## 2.2. Psychological Distress and Cybersex Behavior

Psychological distress is a special relationship between individuals and environmental demands that are perceived as exceeding their abilities, resulting in negative conditions [13]. Stress is a condition caused by the interaction between an individual and their environment, creating a perceived distance between demands that originate from a person's biological, psychological, and social systems in a given situation. Psychological distress is a negative emotional experience experienced by an individual. Psychological distress is also referred to as a specific relationship between an individual and their environment, which is perceived by the individual as something that exceeds their capacity and can endanger their well-being. Each individual interprets psychological distress differently and not all negative experiences can trigger psychological distress. Someone engages in cybersex behavior because they want to release and overcome stress. This means that cybersex behavior can occur when someone is experiencing loneliness and psychological distress [14]. In this case, when loneliness is high, cybersex behavior is also high. When psychological distress is high, cybersex behavior is also high. Therefore, the second hypothesis in this research is: H2: There is a role of psychological distress as a predictor of cybersex behavior among college students in Karawang.

## 2.3. Emotional Maturity and Cybersex Behavior

Emotional maturity is a state or condition of reaching a level of emotional development maturity and therefore an individual no longer displays emotional patterns that are childlike [15]. Instead, they are capable of better controlling their emotions, especially when in social situations. Therefore, an individual with high emotional maturity is able to display emotional patterns that are appropriate for their developmental stage, manage their emotions well, and fulfill the characteristics of emotionally mature individuals such as being able to adapt well, having empathetic abilities, and having good anger management skills without hurting others. Further emphasized that emotional maturity is when an individual critically evaluates a situation before reacting emotionally, no longer reacting without prior thought like children or immature individuals.

Emotional maturity is defined as a condition of achieving personal development where an individual is able to direct and control strong emotions in order to be accepted by themselves and others [16]. Those who are emotionally mature are individuals who have the ability to accept the reality that they are not always the same as others, that each individual has strengths and weaknesses in their lives, so that they do not feel low and useless. One of the areas of emotional maturity is in the sexual realm, where emotions turn into sexual drive or desire that needs to be fulfilled. As individuals develop, they start to develop an interest in the opposite sex, which leads to the emergence of cybersex behavior. Immaturity in an individual's emotions is considered as one of the reasons for the emergence of cybersex behavior. Therefore, the third hypothesis in this research is: H3: There is a role of emotional maturity as a predictor of cybersex behavior among college students in Karawang.

## 2.4. Self-Control and Cybersex Behavior

Self-control is the ability of the body and mind to do what should be done. In this case, self-control enables individuals to make the right choices when faced with temptation, but then negative thoughts and thoughts arise in their minds [17]. Self-control refers to how an individual manages their internal emotions and urges outwardly. Self-control is the ability to direct one's actions in terms of their ability to suppress impulses and impulsive behavior.

Self-control is the ability to organize, direct, and regulate actions that can lead towards positive outcomes. Individuals who are highly disciplined feel that they can control and direct everything that influences their behavior. Individuals with high self-control are usually more cautious in their actions, while those with low self-control usually struggle to form positive behaviors. Self-control has a significant effect on cybersex behavior. It means that people with high self-control will use the Internet in a healthy way, such as not visiting pornographic sites or excessively searching for sexual information [18]. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis in this research is: H4: There is a role of self-control as a predictor of cybersex behavior among university students in Karawang. With that description, this research also aims to see whether there is a role of loneliness, psychological distress, emotional maturity, and self-control as predictors of cybersex behavior among university students in Karawang Regency. Thus, the fifth hypothesis in this research is: H5: There is a role of loneliness, psychological distress, emotional maturity, and self-control together as predictors of cybersex behavior among university students in Karawang.

### 3. Method

This research was conducted on the population of university students who engage in cybersex in Karawang Regency. The method used in this research is quantitative associative with the sampling technique used is convenience sampling with criteria of selecting 349 students in Karawang Regency who meet the research characteristics as respondents. The data collection that will be carried out in this research will use psychological scale instruments to examine the influence of loneliness, psychological distress, emotional maturity, and self-control on cybersex behavior among university students in Karawang Regency. The Psychology Scale used in this research employs the Likert scale model, which is used to measure individual attitudes, opinions, and perceptions with answer gradations from very positive to very negative. Data analysis in this research uses statistical data analysis with multiple linear regression tests using SPSS 26.0.

### 4. Results and Discussion

**Table 1.**

Result of Simple Regression Analysis of Loneliness and Cybersex Behavior

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	11118.704	1	11118.704	61.120	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	62943.258	346	181.917		
	Total	74061.963	347			

a. Dependent variable : Cybersex Behavior

b. Predictors : (Contant), Loneliness

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	32.095	4.811		6.671	.000
	Loneliness	.683	.087	.387	7.818	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Cybersex Behavior

**Table 2.**

Results of Simple Regression Analysis of Psychological Distress and Cybersex Behavior

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3157.810	1	3157.810	15.352	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	71374.614	347	205.691		
	Total	74532.424	348			

a. Dependent variable : Cybersex Behavior

b. Predictors : (Contant), Pyshological Distress

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	58.222	2.940		19.805	.000
	Distress Psikologis	.390	.099	.206	3.918	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Cybersex Behavior

**Table 3.**

Results of Simple Regression Analysis of Emotional Maturity and Cybersex Behavior

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1329.663	1	1329.663	6.303	.013 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	73202.761	347	210.959		
	Total	74532.424	348			

a. Dependent variable : Cybersex Behavior

b. Predictors : (Contant), Emotional Maturity

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	62.535	2.820		22.172	.000
	Emotional Maturity	.122	.049	.134	2.511	.013

a. Dependent Variable: Cybersex Behavior

**Table 4.**

Results of Simple Regression Analysis of Self-Control and Cybersex Behavior

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1326.806	1	1326.806	6.289	.013 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	73205.618	347	210.967		
	Total	74532.424	348			

a. Dependent variable : Cybersex Behavior

b. Predictors : (Contant), Self-Control

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	77.889	3.496		22.280	.000
	Self-Control	-.277	.111	-.133	-2.508	.013

a. Dependent Variable: Cybersex Behavior

**Table 5.**

Results of Multiple Regression Analysis of the Loneliness, Psychological Distress, Emotional Maturity, and Self-Control Scales on Cybersex Behavior in Students in Karawang.

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	12940.938	4	3235.235	18.069	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	61591.486	344	179.045		
	Total	74532.424	348			

a. Dependent variable : Cybersex (Y)

b. Predictors : (Contant), Emotional Maturity (X4), Loneliness (X2), Self-Control (X1), Distress Psikologis (X3)

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	31.863	6.606		4.832	.000
	Self-Control (X1)	-.177	.103	-.082	-1.662	.097
	Loneliness (X2)	.637	.099	.360	6.403	.000
	Psychological Distress (X3)	.058	.106	.031	.548	.084
	Emotional Maturity (X4)	.115	.045	.126	2.567	.011

a. Dependent Variable: Cybersex (Y)

The equation form of multiple linear regression function is as follows:

$$Y = 31.863 + 0.637 (X1) + 0.058 (X2) + 0.115 (X3) + (-0.171) (X4)$$

Based on the results of the statistical data analysis in [Table 1](#), [Table 2](#), [Table 3](#), [Table 4](#), [Table 5](#), all hypotheses in this research are accepted. Furthermore, it can be explained that the value of cybersex behavior has a constant  $Y = 31.863$  when there is no influence from all predictors or independent variables. There will be an increase of 0.637 in cybersex behavior if the loneliness variable increases by one unit. Furthermore, if there is an increase of one unit in the psychological distress variable, then the cybersex behavior will increase by 0.058. Similarly, if there is an increase of one unit in the emotional maturity variable, there will be an increase of 0.115 in the cybersex behavior variable. However, if there is an increase of one unit in the variable of self-control, the cybersex behavior will decrease by -0.171. Furthermore, because the constant regression values are positive for three predictors, namely loneliness, psychological distress, and emotional maturity, it can be concluded that these variables have a positive influence on cybersex behavior. Moreover, for the predictor of self-control with a negative constant, it can be interpreted that this variable has a negative influence on cybersex behavior, where an increase in self-control behavior will be followed by a decrease in cybersex behavior and vice versa.

**Table 6.**

Test of Determination Coefficients

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjust R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.410 <sup>a</sup>	.168	.159	13.425	.168	17.390	4	344	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Psychological distress, Self-control, Emotional maturity, Loneliness

Based on the calculation in [Table 6](#), the magnitude of the role of predictors such as *loneliness*, *psychological distress*, emotional maturity, and *self-control* is 16.8% towards the emergence of cybersex behavior, while 83.2% comes from other predictors that were not examined in this research. Loneliness is a feeling of lack in a relationship with others, which can be caused by the dissatisfaction experienced by an individual with the existing relationship. Loneliness as an unpleasant experience where the quality and quantity of an individual's social relationships can significantly decrease. In this case, the feeling of *loneliness* becomes a compensation for engaging in *cybersex* behavior. Therefore, if an individual feels a high level of *loneliness*, then the likelihood of engaging in *cybersex* behavior is also higher. Greater the feeling of *loneliness*, the higher the number of minutes per day or days per week spent accessing pornography or engaging in *cybersex* behavior.

Depression and feelings of being overwhelmed, which are symptoms of psychological *distress*, play a significant role in the development of *cybersex* usage. This means that psychological distress is a factor that influences *cybersex* behavior. The reasons why an individual engages in *cybersex* behavior are the abundance of easily accessible pornographic websites, curiosity, and the need that arises when they are alone, consuming cybersex is considered as a last resort that is considered effective enough to eliminate boredom and pressure when an individual is facing problems [19].

Furthermore, an individual's emotional maturity also plays a role in cybersex behavior. Emotional maturity is a crucial factor in shaping an individual's behavior. With good emotional maturity, an individual can learn to manage and control their emotions, which allows them to think critically, rationally, and objectively. On the other hand, if an individual's emotional maturity is lacking, this statement is consistent with the understanding that *cybersex* behavior is a poor and immature decision to engage in. Thus, emotional maturity is considered as one of the reasons why *cybersex* behavior emerges in individuals. There is a significant relationship between emotional maturity and individual's sexual behavior. Furthermore, the research revealed that self-control has a negative impact on cybersex behavior. This means that an individual's strong self-control ability will result in a minimal display of cybersex behavior. Self-control is the ability of the body and mind to do what should be done. Basically, self-control plays a role in self-adjustment, so when self-control is lacking, the resulting behaviour tends to be negative [20]. Individuals with high self-control are usually more cautious in their actions, while those with low self-control usually struggle to form positive behaviours. Self-control has a significant influence on *cybersex* behaviour. This means that people with high self-control will use the Internet in a healthy way, such as not visiting pornographic websites or seeking excessive information related to sex [9].

## 5. Conclusion

Research on cybersex behavior is still limited to the Karawang regency area, so the results cannot be generalized to all individuals who have similar characteristics but are located in different areas outside the population boundaries of this research. Furthermore, the inconsistency in the role of psychological distress as a predictor of cybersex behavior is yet to be confirmed, as previous research has shown that psychological distress has an influence on the emergence of cybersex behavior. Therefore, further research is needed to further examine cybersex behavior by expanding the population of the research area, analyzing other factors that influence cybersex behavior, and also to explore dimensions that can explain cybersex behavior among university students.

## Authors' Declaration

**Authors' contributions and responsibilities** – The authors made substantial contributions to the conception and design of the study. The authors took responsibility for data analysis, interpretation, and discussion of results. The authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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