

Sexual Relationships of Elderly Males Who Have Lost Their Spouses

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This paper focuses on the sexual behavior and view of the 60-70's age. The author investigate how an intimate relation with the opposite sex is formed, and how they act in their life, what kind of meaning of the opposite sex friend exist on their life. Subjects were three men over sixty living in suburban Tokyo and Osaka who lost their spouses and stayed widowers since, but having sexual relationships at present. Data were collected through a semi-structured interviewing and observation. Results reveal that though the subjects realize a diminishing physical function, they refuse to accept the negative labeling regarding their mental condition. Having a relationship with the current partners is like having a pseudo-marriage, bringing high spirits and a feeling of happiness. Sexuality functions as a realization of their masculinity as well as bringing them physical pleasure; the existence of a female partner could also help elevate their self-esteem.

Keywords: elderly people, social norm, sexual relationship, sexual desire.

Artikel ini mencermati perilaku seksual dan pandangan mereka yang berusia 60-70-an. Penulis meneliti bagaimana hubungan mesra dengan lawan jenis terbentuk dan bagaimana mereka berperilaku dalam kehidupannya, dan apa makna keberadaan teman lawan jenisnya tersebut. Para subjek adalah tiga duda berusia di atas 60-an yang kehilangan istrinya dan tetap menduda, namun memiliki hubungan seksual saat ini. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan observasi. Hasil-hasil mengungkapkan bahwa para subjek yang walaupun mengakui mengalami kemunduran fisik, namun mereka menyangkal pelabelan negatif yang dikanakan terhadap kondisi mentalnya. Memiliki hubungan dengan mitranya dirasakan sebagai pseudo-pernikahan yang mampu mempertahankan semangatnya dan menimbulkan rasa senang. Seks berfungsi juga sebagai realitas kejantannya sekaligus memberikan kenikmatan jasmaniah; adanya mitra perempuan juga meningkatkan rasa percaya dirinya.

Kata kunci: manusia usia lanjut, norma sosial, hubungan seksual, gairah seksual.

Sexual health is an important component to enhance quality of life (Montreal Declaration, 2005) and it is related to people's physical function and desire. Nevertheless, Japan has a social and cultural background in which the sexual life of elderly people is regarded negatively (Becker, 1984). Elderly people involved in love affairs are generally treated with disrespect (Yoshizawa, 1986). This is quite contrary to numerous cases where elderly people are considered superior to younger people in terms of ability and personality.

Sociological studies in Japan have not treated elderly people's intimacy or sexual behaviors with the opposite sex as an important subject of research. It is not only because sexuality itself is considered to be a very

private phenomenon with negligible social effect, but also because researchers have difficulties getting into the private aspects of individual sexual behavior. In other words, it has been thought that sexual matters including both definition of genders (masculinity vs. femininity) and sexual behaviors (premarital, marital, or extramarital) are only related to the behavioral code of each member of society that will not be handed down to future generations (Matsuzono, 1987). Therefore, sexual matters have been regarded as having insignificant social effect.

However, sexual matters should not be considered as private aspects because individuals decide what to do according to both their intentions and social norms. There are several reasons why society denies the sexual behavior of elderly people: social misunderstanding and disregard for them resulting from their short life expectancy and denial of their social value due to little possibility of reproduction in their remarriage or sexual behavior.

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