


# Sapiosexual as the Intelligence-Oriented Fetish: Is This Just a Popular Term or Does it Need to be Formalized?

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## INTRODUCTION

Currently, the term 'sapiosexual' is one of the new terms that can be used in the field of sex education (Situmorang, 2024a). This term has appeared in the last few years in various mass media (Dzulfikar, 2018; Garg, 2024; Salwadira, 2022), but scientifically there are very few studies. Sapiosexuality can be defined as someone who is attracted to a sexually intelligent individual to the point where they value that intelligence above all other qualities in their partner (Cover, 2018).

Based on the development of the existing phenomenon, some individuals who identify themselves as sapiosexual are those who do so to assert a sexual identity that deviates from conventional binary differences such as heterosexual/homosexual and male/female (Jas, 2020). It is possible to examine sapiosexuality—the phenomena in which people are predominantly drawn to intelligent people—from societal, psychological, and identity-formation angles. Self-identification has become more and more important as social media and the internet have grown in popularity (Situmorang, 2024a). Sapiosexuality might be in line with the urge to stand out from the crowd and show off one's uniqueness in a culture that is becoming more and more inclusive and diverse.

Sapiosexuality may result from a preference for intellectual stimulation, emotional closeness, and long-term compatibility over surface-level or physical attraction (Waterman, 2022). Because it fits their value systems, people with higher education degrees or cognitive complexity can be more drawn to partners who share their intellectual interests (Gignac, Darbyshire, & Ooi, 2018).

Labeling of 'sapiosexual' seems to be more widely practiced among today's young people who communicate on online social media (Ambler, 2017). Through the lenses of identity expression, societal trends, and the mechanics of digital connection, the relationship between sapiosexuality and the pervasive usage of online social media can be comprehended. People can create, display, and explore their identities on social networking sites like Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and dating applications like OkCupid or Bumble. These platforms provide many young people with a platform to express their views, tastes, and distinctive qualities to a worldwide audience. With the self-expression capabilities provided by these platforms, identifying as sapiosexual—a term that indicates a primary attraction to intelligence rather than physical appearance—makes sense.

The specifics of sapiosexuality are open to debate. Some claim it has something to do with sexuality or orientation so eventually some dating apps on the internet even provide identification options for sapiosexuals (Ambler, 2017; Jas, 2020). Furthermore, some see sapiosexuality as one of the intelligence-oriented fetishes (Micluția, 2019).

The meaning of the phrase 'sapiosexuality' ultimately depends on how each person wants to interpret it. Furthermore, in this article, the author would like to discuss things that need to be known about sapiosexuality, so that it is hoped that it can become a new area in the context of sexual education (Situmorang, 2024b), both in the realm of formal, informal, and non-formal education.

## **METHODS**

In this study, the author used a literature review method with a narrative type (Snyder, 2019), in which the author examined various literature specific to the context of research in the psychological realm. The literature is scientific journal articles, reference books, and other information from credible sources. The author discussed sapiosexuality as a phenomenon that needs to be studied further in the context of sex education. This topic is the latest and needs to be discussed more scientifically. The author hopes that this paper can give special consideration to being able to include the discussion of sapiosexuals in the context of formal, informal, and non-formal education. In addition, further researchers are expected to be able to link sapiosexuality with the well-established theory of multiple intelligences. So that this sapiosexual discussion will become more interesting and comprehensive again. In the end, it is hoped that in the future a more up-to-date psychological instrument regarding sapiosexuals can be built based on the theory of multiple intelligences to be used in the implementation of sex education in the future.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Meaning of Sapiosexual**

By definition, the word sapiosexual is a fairly new word, as it was first used in Merriam-Webster in 2004. The dictionary explains that the definition of sapiosexual is *"of, relating to, or characterized by sexual or romantic attraction to highly intelligent people"* (Merriam-Webster, 2004). Furthermore, if studied etymologically, the word sapiosexual comes from the Latin roots 'sapien', which means wise, and 'sexualis', which means sexual (Urban Dictionary, n.d.).

So, from the above study, it can be concluded that sapiosexuality is a type of sexuality that is more interested in the content of a person's mind intellectually than body appearance. To feel sexually attracted to another person, a sapiosexual person must feel intellectually stimulated before he/she can be said to be in love.

In practice, anyone can identify themselves as a sapiosexual, including heterosexual and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) people (Beemyn, 2015). Sapiosexuality is not considered a new type of sexual gender, because anyone of any sexual orientation can become a sapiosexual as long as the basis of attraction is intelligence.

### **Intellectuality Above Other Entities**

A sapiosexual is very interested in intelligence, so when they are looking for a partner, they will focus more on the intelligence of their potential partner than their appearance. Other entities such as social status, background, body shape, size, facial features, and others will be requirements that are not very important to them. For them, intellect is above all (Gignac, Darbyshire, & Ooi, 2018).

Furthermore, because intelligence is valued more than any other entity, sapiosexual people will be more likely to show their attraction to others in a way that is not focused on the things previously mentioned. However, they will focus on their extraordinary way of thinking, way of speaking, what they believe, what they stand for, their life principles, morals, values, and their interest in something (Wisner, 2019).

### **Controversy and Criticism of Sapiosexual**

As a new term, sapiosexual has controversy and criticism as well. Some argue that sapiosexuality cannot be equated with other sexual orientations that have prevailed in the world, but this is only considered as one type of attraction for a person. Sapiosexual people are considered the same as people in general who are interested in other entities, but what makes the difference is the focus of the entity, which focuses on intellect (Desai, 2019).

On the other hand, sapiosexuality is considered as something exclusive and discriminatory. Sapiosexuality implies that a person is more attracted to those who have good cognitive or intellectual abilities, which subconsciously and indirectly excludes those who may be disabled or have special needs, and those who do not have a high degree because they are unable to attend school or university, which usually happens to those who are poor and destitute (Arboine, 2019).

However, if examined more deeply, the context of the assessment of sapiosexuals above is still too shallow. From my point of view, intellectuality can not only be seen from whether the person is disabled or has special needs and whether they have a high degree or not, but more than that. Because these two things are not the main parameters in assessing a person's intellect. Facts prove that many people with disabilities (Kulkarni, 2016) and the poor have quality intellectuals (Croizet & Claire, 1998) so that they can become the best version of themselves (Situmorang, 2022) and be successful in the fields they are engaged in. For me, intelligence is not just smart but brilliant and certainly has a wider spectrum. My opinion is based on the theory of multiple intelligences put forward by Gardner (1983, 1999, 2008), that in fact, human intelligence has a very broad spectrum. In his book 'Frame of the Mind', Gardner (1983) initially found seven bits of intelligence, namely logical-mathematical, linguistic, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. After that, based on the intelligence criteria above, Gardner (1999) found the eighth intelligence, namely naturalist. And finally, Gardner (2008) raises the existence of the ninth intelligence, namely existential intelligence.

### **Research Related to Sapiosexual**

Miller (2000) proposed that intelligence, as an indicator of biological fitness, can be considered a sexually attractive quality in partners. This is supported by the statement put forward by Brown, Wai, and Chabris (2021), that intelligence is a determining factor for a person's success in social relationships (including in love relationships).

Empirical evidence suggests that a positive relationship between physical symmetry and intelligence, in addition to potential survival and other factors, may lead to the perception of intelligence as sexual attractiveness. As an alternative, because intelligence is a reliable predictor of 'good genes,' intelligence may be sexually appealing on its own (Prokosch et al., 2005). This is supported by research conducted by Jonason et al. (2019) that less intelligent partners are less desirable, and intelligence is highly valued as a long-term partner. In addition, the study found that both men and women care about their partner's intelligence.

In another study, Haselton and Miller (2006) discovered that women of childbearing age were more attracted to creatively intelligent men than wealthy men. Furthermore, if intelligence is a truly sexually attractive trait in men, women should find relatively intelligent men more attractive during ovulation than during the luteal phase (Gangestad, Thornhill, & Garver-Apgar, 2010). In contrast, a study conducted by Janssen, McBride, Yarber, Hill, and Butler (2008) reported that some men find intelligence to be a sexually attractive characteristic in a woman. Furthermore, in a study conducted by Jonason and Antonon (2019), it was found that men and women prefer partners with the same education so that they are intellectually equal.

From some of the above research results, it can be suggested that some people may find intelligence to be a trait that arouses sexual arousal in others. In addition, some people may find intelligence to be the most sexually arousing trait in others (i.e., sapiosexual). However, the evidence in other studies is very interesting to discuss to strengthen this theory about sapiosexuality.

### **Psychological Measurement Instrument to Measure Sapiosexual**

Currently, there is an instrument called the Sapiosexuality Questionnaire (SapioQ) which was constructed by Gignac, Darbyshire, and Ooi (2018) to measure a person's level of sapiosexuality. This instrument consists of nine items measured on a five-point Likert scale, namely: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. The nine items relate directly to the sexual attractiveness of intelligence. For example, item 1: *"A physically attractive person with only average intelligence is a turn-off for me."*; item 2: *"Listening to someone speak very intelligently arouses me sexually."*; item 4: *"A very high level of intelligence alone is enough for me to be attracted to someone sexually."*; item 6: *"I would likely feel sexually attracted to someone significantly more intelligent than me."*; item 8: *"It would excite me sexually to have an intellectually stimulating conversation with a potential partner."*; and item 9: *"A very high level of intelligence in a partner is necessary for me to be attracted to them sexually."* Meanwhile, the other three items, namely 3, 5, and 7 have negative meanings (unfavorable).

Based on the results of this study, the existing SapioQ instrument can be adapted and used scientifically to identify a person's level of sapiosexuality. This instrument is quite simple and quite easy to use and interpret.

### **Recommendations**

Although currently, the implementation of sexual education in various sectors has not formally introduced the existence of sapiosexuals, this should be one of the considerations for introducing this to young people. So, it is hoped that young people will not immediately self-diagnose and claim to be sapiosexual based on the information they find and read from various online mass media. However, through the guidance and cooperation provided by parents, teachers, counselors, psychologists, and the community, they can be helped to identify themselves whether they are sapiosexual or not. Of course, this can be done through a formal psychological test regarding the level of sapiosexuality with SapioQ. In addition, based on the studies on multiple intelligences that have been stated above, further researchers are expected to be able to link sapiosexuality with the established theory of multiple intelligences. So that this sapiosexual

discussion will become more interesting and comprehensive again. In the end, it is hoped that in the future a more sophisticated psychological instrument on sapiosexuals will be built based on the theory of multiple intelligences.

### **Implications**

Through these discussions, the implication is that it can give special consideration to being able to include the discussion of sapiosexuals in the context of formal, informal, and non-formal education. So, it is hoped that all parties who have concerns in the field of sex education can start to develop appropriate programs and interventions related to this issue.

### **Limitations and Further Research**

Based on the results of this study, the discussion on sapiosexuality will continue to be an interesting discussion to be studied further scientifically. The idea of more comprehensive research by linking the theory of multiple intelligences is needed, so that in the end this sapiosexual theory can be relevant for everyone who has different intelligences.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the discussions that have been described, it can be concluded that sapiosexuality is one of the most interesting discussions to be discussed further in the implementation of sexual education in various education sectors because it is very relevant to the current situation and developments. Despite the controversy and criticism that still occurs in the field, the topic of sapiosexuality will continue to grow stronger by the day. It is evident that currently psychological instruments have been developed to measure this, and there have been quite several scientific studies targeting it. So hopefully, this theory about sapiosexuality can be more scientifically trusted in the future.

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### **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT**

The author confirms sole responsibility for the following: study conception and design, data collection, analysis and interpretation of results, and manuscript preparation.

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