

Factors Associated with Adolescent Sexual Behavior at Public Health Centers (Puskesmas): A Cross-Sectional Study

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ABSTRACT

Adolescent sexual behavior is a major public health concern due to its association with sexually transmitted infections, unintended pregnancies, and psychosocial problems. This study aimed to analyze factors associated with sexual behavior among adolescents at public health centers (Puskesmas). A cross-sectional design was conducted involving 150 adolescents aged 15–19 years selected using simple random sampling. Data were collected using structured questionnaires covering knowledge of reproductive health, attitudes toward premarital sex, peer influence, media exposure, and sexual behavior. Data analysis was performed using chi-square tests and logistic regression. The results showed that 38.7% of respondents had risky sexual behavior. Knowledge ($p=0.002$), attitudes ($p=0.001$), peer influence ($p=0.000$), and media exposure ($p=0.004$) were significantly associated with adolescent sexual behavior. Peer influence was the most dominant factor ($OR=3.45$). In conclusion, adolescent sexual behavior is influenced by individual and social factors. Strengthening reproductive health education and peer-based interventions at Puskesmas is recommended.

Keywords : Adolescent Health, Sexual Behavior, Peer Influence, Reproductive Health, Cross-Sectional Study

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a transitional period characterized by rapid physical, psychological, and social development. During this phase, individuals begin to explore romantic relationships and sexual identity, which may increase vulnerability to risky sexual behavior. Sexual behavior among adolescents has become a significant public health issue worldwide due to its contribution to sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS, and unintended pregnancies.

The World Health Organization reports that millions of adolescents contract STIs each year, and adolescent pregnancy remains a major contributor to maternal and neonatal health problems. In Indonesia, national health surveys indicate increasing trends in premarital sexual

activity among adolescents, particularly in urban and semi-urban areas.

Public health centers (Puskesmas) play a critical role in adolescent health promotion through reproductive health counseling, youth-friendly services, and community outreach programs. However, despite these efforts, risky sexual behavior persists. Several factors such as knowledge, attitudes, peer pressure, and exposure to mass media have been identified as determinants of adolescent sexual behavior.

Understanding these factors at the local level is essential for developing effective interventions. Therefore, this study aimed to analyze factors associated with adolescent sexual behavior at Puskesmas using a cross-sectional approach.

METHOD

This study employed a cross-sectional design conducted at selected public health centers (Puskesmas) in Indonesia from January to March 2025. The population consisted of adolescents aged 15–19 years who visited Puskesmas during the study period. A total of 150 respondents were selected using simple random sampling. The dependent variable was adolescent sexual behavior (risky and non-risky). Independent variables included knowledge of reproductive health, attitudes toward premarital sex, peer influence, and media exposure. Data were collected using a validated structured questionnaire consisting of demographic information and behavioral measures. Data were analyzed using SPSS software. Chi-square tests were applied to identify associations between variables, and logistic regression was used to determine dominant factors. Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional ethics committee. Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

RESULTS

Characteristics of Respondents of the 150 adolescents, 55% were female and 45% male. Most respondents (62%) were aged 17–19 years. Sexual Behavior: a total of 58 respondents (38.7%) reported risky sexual behavior, including early sexual initiation and multiple partners. Factors Associated with Sexual Behavior: Significant associations were found between sexual behavior and knowledge ($p=0.002$), attitudes ($p=0.001$), peer influence ($p=0.000$), and media exposure ($p=0.004$). Logistic regression analysis showed that peer influence was the strongest predictor (OR=3.45; 95% CI: 1.89–6.30).

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that risky sexual behavior among adolescents remains prevalent. Adolescents with poor reproductive health knowledge were more likely to engage in risky behavior, supporting previous studies that highlight the protective role of health education.

Negative attitudes toward premarital sex were associated with higher risk, suggesting that value-based education is essential. Peer influence emerged as the most significant factor, reflecting adolescents' tendency to conform to social norms within their peer groups.

Media exposure also contributed to risky behavior, particularly access to sexually explicit content via social media and the internet. These findings align with existing literature indicating that uncontrolled media consumption may influence adolescent sexual norms.

Puskesmas should strengthen youth-friendly reproductive health services, peer education programs, and digital health promotion strategies to address these risk factors effectively.

CONCLUSION

Risky sexual behavior among adolescents at Puskesmas is influenced by knowledge, attitudes, peer influence, and media exposure. Peer influence is the dominant factor. Comprehensive reproductive health education and peer-based interventions are essential to reduce risky sexual behavior among adolescents.

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