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The Correlation Between Parent Communication and Knowledge Regarding Sexual Behavior in Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Premarital sexual behavior in adolescents tends to increase. This is caused by several factors, one of which is low knowledge about sexual behavior. Knowledge in adolescents is one of the duties of parents. Therefore, communication between parents and adolescents is important. This study aims to determine the relationship between parental communication and knowledge about sexual behavior in adolescents. The research method used is a descriptive correlation with a cross-sectional approach. The population of this study is adolescents aged 12-15 years living at home with their parents. The number of samples was 114 The research instrument used a knowledge questionnaire and FARBCS. The data analysis used was univariate and bivariate analysis with bivariate analysis using the Spearman rank test. The results showed that 51.8% of the 114 respondents had adequate knowledge and 88.6% of respondents had open communication. The results of the correlation test showed a p-value of 0.884. The conclusion from this study is that there is no relationship between parental communication and knowledge about sexual behavior in adolescents. It is hoped that future researchers will examine the factors that influence knowledge about sexual behavior.

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Introduction

The period between childhood and adulthood is known as adolescence. Various changes occur in this phase, namely physical, psychological, and social changes. Physical changes in adolescents include the emergence of primary sex characteristics (in adolescent girls, menstruation; in adolescent boys, wet dreams), and secondary sex characteristics (such as the growth of the Adam's apple in boys, a deeper voice, broader hips, and larger breasts in girls) [1]. Meanwhile, social behavior changes in adolescents also include the need for self-recognition, the desire to be acknowledged as an individual, the desire to conform, and the desire to be independent [2].

These changes make adolescents interested in forming relationships with the opposite sex. This interest is not only about exchanging glances or conversations but also about the urge to release their sexual desires. Sexual desires are usually expressed in the form of dating. Such relationships are prone to health issues, particularly reproductive health, such as premarital sex [3].

Sexual urges towards the same sex and the opposite sex motivate sexual behavior. Various sexual behaviors range from attraction to actions like dating, petting, and intercourse [4]. According to Ref. [5], 75.7% of adolescents in Indonesia have engaged in premarital sex. Most adolescents in Indonesia are unaware of the impact of sexual behavior.

The development of technology can be a factor in accessing sexual information; however, it often takes a negative form like pornography, and can lead to sexual deviations [6]. The impact of adolescents' lack of sexual knowledge includes unwanted pregnancies, abortions, sexual violence, and sexual exploitation [7]. Every year, there are 17 million births from women under 24, some of which are unwanted pregnancies [8].

The negative impact of adolescents' lack of sexual knowledge has drawn government attention. Therefore, the government has launched several programs to overcome these issues. Various factors can impact adolescents' sexual awareness, including internal factors (age and self-control) and external factors (parental communication and environment) [9]. One strategy to increase adolescents' knowledge, awareness, attitudes, and behavior in living a healthy and responsible reproductive life is through communication between parents and children [10]. Considering the significant influence of parents in preventing premarital sexual behavior, parental communication is an external factor that can influence sexual awareness and enhance adolescents' understanding of sexuality, thus providing them with accurate information [11]. However, some parents in Indonesia believe that discussing sexual issues with their adolescent children is inappropriate, and adolescents also feel reluctant and embarrassed to ask their parents about these matters [12].

Based on several factors that can influence adolescents' knowledge about sexual behavior and various strategies that can respond to issues regarding sexual behavior knowledge among adolescents, including many government programs in collaboration with health centers or schools, peers, and families, the most influential efforts towards adolescent behavior are believed to be communication with parents [12]. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the relationship between parental communication and adolescents' knowledge about sexual behavior.

Methods

This research is quantitative with a descriptive correlation design and a cross-sectional method. The population of this study consists of all students of SMP Pasundan 1 Cimaung, 7th and 8th-grade students, totaling 160 students. The sampling technique used was proportional sampling, taking samples from each sub-population proportional to the number of members in the population. In this study, the respondents included those who met the inclusion criteria, namely adolescents aged 12-15 years, and the exclusion criteria, namely students without parents and those with single parents. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a 5% confidence level, resulting in 114 respondents.

The research instrument used a questionnaire distributed to students under the supervision of the researchers after providing an explanation and obtaining their consent to participate. The sexual behavior knowledge questionnaire consisted of 10 items modified from Ref. [13]. The FARBCS questionnaire consisted of 20 questions, with 10 for parent-adolescent communication and 10 about sexuality and HIV/AIDS communication. The questionnaire was valid and reliable, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.86 for the FARBCS questionnaire.

The Product Moment Correlation was used to test the questionnaire's validity, and Cronbach's Alpha was used to test its reliability. The validity test results showed a range of calculated r values of (0.456 - 0.732) > table r (0.396), resulting in 10 valid items out of 21. Reliability testing showed a calculated r value of 0.743, greater than the table r value. Data analysis in this study included univariate and bivariate analyses. Univariate analysis was performed to assess knowledge about sexual behavior, parent-adolescent communication, adolescent age, parents' education, information sources, and students' gender. Bivariate analysis used the Spearman rank test to determine the relationship between parental communication and knowledge about sexual behavior in adolescents. This study passed the research ethics committee of Universitas 'Aisyiyah Bandung, with the number: 451/KEP.01/UNISABANDUNG/V/2023.

Results

The provided data in Table 1 reveals several key insights about the demographic and informational characteristics of the sample. The sample comprises 114 individuals, with a majority being female (60.5%) and the rest male (39.5%). Age-wise, most participants are 13 years old (46.5%), followed by those aged 14 (28.9%), 15 (15.8%), and 12 (8.8%). In terms of parental education, a significant portion of parents have education up to junior high school (43.5%), followed by elementary school (39.5%), senior high school (14.9%), and a very small percentage with a bachelor's degree (1.8%). Regarding sources of information, the internet is the most commonly utilized (28.1%), followed by peers (21.9%), and teachers (14%), while a notable percentage of individuals (18.4%) never seek information. These insights suggest that educational strategies should be adapted to the predominant characteristics of the sample, such as focusing on digital platforms for information dissemination and addressing the educational backgrounds of parents to enhance their engagement in their children's learning.

Table 1. Adolescent Characteristics

Characteristics	(n)	(%)
Gender		
Male	45	39.5
Female	69	60.5
Age		
12	10	8.8
13	53	46.5
14	33	28.9
15	18	15.8
Parents' Education		
Elementary School	45	39.5
Junior High School	50	43.5
Senior High School	17	14.9
Bachelor Degree	2	1.8
Information Sources		
Teacher	16	14
Internet	32	28.1
Health Workers	3	2.6
Peers	25	21.9
Parents	10	8.8
Television	7	6.1
Never	21	18.4
Total	**114**	**100**

The data on knowledge levels (Table 2) among the 114 individuals reveals that only a small proportion (6.1%) possess a high level of knowledge. A majority (51.8%) have an adequate level of knowledge, while a significant portion (42.1%) have a low level of knowledge. This distribution indicates that while over half of the individuals have a sufficient understanding, there is a considerable need for educational interventions to raise the knowledge levels,

especially among the 42.1% with low knowledge. Tailoring educational programs to bridge this gap could enhance overall knowledge and potentially improve related outcomes for the group.

Table 2. Distribution based on Sexual Behavior Knowledge

Knowledge Level	(n)	(%)
High	7	6.1
Adequate	59	51.8
Low	48	42.1
Total	114	100

The data on communication levels (Table 3) among the 114 individuals shows that a vast majority (88.6%) have an open level of communication. A smaller portion (10.5%) exhibit a moderate level of communication, while only a negligible fraction (0.9%) have a closed level of communication. This indicates that most individuals are open in their communication, which can be beneficial for collaborative and interactive educational approaches. The presence of a small group with moderate or closed communication levels suggests a need for strategies to encourage more open communication among all individuals to ensure effective information exchange and engagement.

Table 3. Distribution based on Parental Communication

Communication Level	(n)	(%)
Open	101	88.6
Moderate	12	10.5
Closed	1	0.9
Total	114	100

Discussion

This study shows that there is no relationship between parental communication and knowledge about adolescent sexual behavior with a significance of 0.884. This study does not align with Ref. [10] findings, which indicate that parental communication influences adolescent sexual behavior. According to that study, it can be concluded that the better the communication between parents and adolescents, the lower the risky sexual behavior in adolescents. However, in this study, good parental communication is not related to increased knowledge in adolescents.

Based on the results of this study, 38.1% of adolescents obtain information about sexual behavior through the Internet. The concern about the number of adolescents using the internet to get information is that when parents do not accompany adolescents, it can lead to

misinterpretations of the information. Information about sexual behavior from the internet is also considered less accurate [14].

The second most common source of knowledge is from peers, accounting for 21.9%. Adolescence involves the development of extensive social relationships. This causes adolescents to be more inclined to their social environment than their parents. More intense relationships with friends and the social environment reduce the influence of parents on adolescents.

Knowledge from parents contributes only 8.8%. Parents in Indonesia still regard discussions about sexual behavior as negative and taboo to discuss with adolescents [15]. Therefore, adolescents feel embarrassed to communicate about this with their parents and choose to seek information through the Internet or peers. However, these sources cannot be trusted for accuracy, leading to incorrect knowledge.

The results show that most respondents, 51.8%, fall into the sufficient knowledge category. According to the knowledge questionnaire, the areas that need improvement include the impacts of sexual behavior and the forms of sexual behavior. Supported by data from Ref. [16] 35.3% of adolescent girls and 31.2% of adolescent boys believe that girls can become pregnant with just one sexual intercourse.

Misconceptions about sexual behavior are due to low self-control and low knowledge about sexual behavior [17]. Incorrect information can lead adolescents to deviant behavior, potentially triggering sexual urges from within and from external influences. Adolescents who cannot control their emotions and thoughts are easily led into premarital sexual behavior.

Various factors can influence adolescent knowledge, including age, gender, sources of information, and the environment [18]. Given the respondents' ages of 12-15 years, the likelihood of obtaining information is still minimal. The environment can also affect knowledge about sexual behavior. Adolescents spend much of their time in school environments daily. Thus, they often socialize with friends, which can negatively impact them if they exchange inaccurate information. The lack of school programs providing information about sexuality can also affect adolescent knowledge.

The family environment also influences adolescent knowledge. Adolescents who have open communication with their parents benefit by building trust between parents and children [19]. The study results also show that open communication is prevalent at 88.6%. Analysis indicates that open communication is dominant. This finding correlates with the large number of female respondents. According to Ref. [20], girls are more open to communicating about sexuality with their parents than boys. Open communication in this study does not relate to knowledge about sexual behavior, as the information from parents is not accurate. Relating this to the parents' education level, which mostly is junior high school (43.5%), parental

education affects the ability to provide accurate and comprehensive information about sexual behavior to their children. A person's intelligence and understanding of a subject are influenced by their education level, which also motivates them to seek more detailed information [3].

Comprehensive education does not just teach the dangers of premarital sex but also enhances adolescents' skills in controlling themselves from engaging in premarital sexual behavior [21]. The lack of specific school education about sexuality results in low efforts to increase knowledge. Consequently, adolescents have insufficient knowledge, which can risk their sexual behavior and impact the potential risks they face.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that most respondents have low knowledge despite nearly all respondents engaging in open communication with their parents. There is no significant relationship between parental communication and knowledge about sexual behavior among adolescents at SMP Pasundan 1 Cimaung, Bandung Regency.

Schools can collaborate with local health centers or healthcare professionals to develop initiatives or programs to provide an understanding of sexual behavior, especially for adolescents. Health education provided by healthcare professionals, acting as educators, can include education on sexual behavior and its impacts on adolescents using engaging media such as TikTok or YouTube videos. These platforms can attract the interest of adolescents and be easily accessible to broaden information about adolescent sexual behavior. Besides providing education, schools can also establish a Youth Care Health Service program with the assistance of healthcare professionals.

For future researchers, it is necessary to conduct further research on other factors influencing knowledge about sexual behavior that have not been studied, using different research methods, as this study requires ongoing investigation.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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