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## **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE AND FREE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR AMONG ADOLESCENTS**

**Ainul Maghfiroh**

Bachelor of Public Health Study Program; Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Kesehatan Kendal, Jln Laut 31 Kendal, Jawa Tengah 51311, Indonesia  
[Ainulmaghfiroh0504@gmail.com](mailto:Ainulmaghfiroh0504@gmail.com)

### **ABSTRACT**

Adolescent knowledge about reproductive health and the risks of promiscuous sexual behavior is one of the important factors in determining their sexual behavior. Adolescents with less knowledge about the risks of promiscuous sex tend to have a higher tendency to engage in risky sexual behavior compared to adolescents with good knowledge. The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between knowledge and promiscuous sexual behavior in adolescents. The research method is a quantitative study with a cross-sectional approach, statistical tests were analyzed using the Chi Square statistical test. The research instrument used a questionnaire on knowledge and promiscuous sexual behavior that had been tested for validity and reliability, a population of 4940 respondents with a purposive sampling technique, a sample of 98 adolescents aged 15-19 years. The results of the study showed a relationship between knowledge and promiscuous sexual behavior in adolescents with a p value of 0.021 and an OR value of 2.71, which means that poor knowledge increases the risk of bad promiscuous sexual behavior by 2.71 times than good knowledge. Conclusion: there is a relationship between knowledge and promiscuous sexual behavior.

Keywords: adolescents; free sexual behavior; knowledge

### **INTRODUCTION**

The transition from childhood to adulthood is marked by significant changes in physical, sexual, psychological, and social aspects that occur simultaneously. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines adolescents as individuals between the ages of 10 and 19. The number of adolescents is estimated to reach around 360 million people, or about 20% of the total population in the South-East Asia Region (SEAR). Although this transition period provides various opportunities for individual development, this phase also carries a number of risks to the health and well-being of adolescents. Contrary to the common perception that adolescents are a relatively healthy age group, the reality is that adolescents still face various public health issues. (World Health Organization, 2025)

Adolescence is a phase of development characterized by significant biological, psychological, and social changes. At this stage, adolescents begin to experience reproductive maturation and an increased interest in the opposite sex, accompanied by a high level of curiosity about sexuality. If not balanced with adequate knowledge and self-control, these conditions can increase adolescents' vulnerability to risky sexual behavior, including promiscuity. This behavior has the potential to cause various negative effects, such as pregnancy outside of marriage, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS, and psychosocial disorders such as anxiety, depression, and social stigma. (Kusumastuti & Lismidiati, 2018).

Teenagers' knowledge about reproductive health and the risks of promiscuous behavior is one of the important factors in determining their sexual behavior. Teenagers with less knowledge about the risks of promiscuous sex tend to be more likely to engage in risky sexual behavior than teenagers who are well informed. Conversely, teenagers who are better informed are able to anticipate risks and make more responsible decisions regarding their sexual activities (Kamba, et al, 2025) Teenagers' lack of knowledge is often caused by limited access to accurate

and comprehensive reproductive health information. Sex education is still considered taboo in some communities, so teenagers tend to obtain information from unreliable sources, such as social media and peers. This misinformation can shape misconceptions and encourage unhealthy sexual behavior.

Several empirical studies have shown a correlation between the level of knowledge among adolescents and promiscuous behaviour. Research conducted in secondary schools found that there is a significant correlation between knowledge and promiscuous behaviour among adolescents.(Erni, Sitti Nurbaya, 2025) Adequate knowledge about promiscuity and its consequences is expected to strengthen adolescents' ability to promote healthy and responsible sexual behaviour. Therefore, it is important to conduct more in-depth research on the relationship between knowledge and promiscuous behaviour among adolescents in order to provide recommendations for reproductive health education programmes in schools and communities.

The findings of the study show that adolescent boys have significantly lower levels of reproductive health knowledge, where this lack of knowledge contributes to an increase in risky sexual behaviour. This condition needs to be a special concern for policy makers, so that reproductive health socialisation and education efforts are not only focused on female adolescents. The lack of understanding of reproductive health among male adolescents has the potential to increase the risk of female adolescents engaging in deviant sexual behaviour.(Yusuf & Hamdi, 2023). Based on this explanation, this study aims to examine the relationship between adolescents' level of knowledge and promiscuous behaviour, in order to determine the extent to which adolescents' knowledge is related to promiscuous behaviour in their surroundings.

## **METHOD**

This research is a quantitative study with a cross-sectional approach conducted in the Kendal City Subdistrict. According to 2025 data from the Kendal Regency Population and Civil Registration Office, the population of adolescents aged 15–19 years in the Kendal City Subdistrict is 4,940.(Dispendukcapil, 2025). The sample in this study used the Slovin formula to obtain a research sample of 98 participants. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, with a sample size of 98 people. This study took place from May 2025 to July 2025. The questionnaire on knowledge of casual sex contains 15 questions. The questionnaire on knowledge and behaviour regarding casual sex has been tested for validity. The validity test was conducted by comparing the calculated  $r$  value obtained from the Pearson Product Moment statistical test with the table  $r$  value. The table  $r$  value was determined based on a sample size of 30 respondents, which was 0.361 at a significance level of  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The validity test results showed that there were several statements that had a calculated  $r$  value smaller than the table  $r$ . However, these items were retained after revisions were made in consultation with experts, with reference to relevant concepts and theories, because these items were considered important in describing and identifying the data experienced by the respondents. Furthermore, the reliability test results showed that the three questionnaires had Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.7, indicating that the research instruments had a good level of internal consistency. In detail, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient values for each questionnaire showed that the instruments were suitable for use in research.. (Muflih & Syafitri, 2018)

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Age**

Tabel 1.

Respondent Characteristics Based on Age

Variabel	Mean	Standar deviasi	Min	Max
Age	17,15	1,334	14	19

Based on the descriptive analysis of the respondent age variable in a study on knowledge of promiscuous behaviour among adolescents, a mean value of 17.15 years was obtained. This indicates that the average respondent was in late adolescence, which is a transitional period towards adulthood characterised by physical maturity and increased curiosity, including in relation to sexual behaviour. The standard deviation value of 1.334 indicates that the distribution of respondents' ages is relatively homogeneous and does not show too much variation from the mean value. The youngest respondent was 14 years old, while the oldest was 19 years old, indicating that this study covered early to late adolescence. This age range is in line with the focus of the study, given that adolescence is a phase that is vulnerable to environmental influences, psychosocial development, and a tendency to explore risky behaviours, including promiscuous behaviour. Thus, the age characteristics of the respondents in this study are considered representative in describing the sexual conditions and behaviours of adolescents. In addition, age also plays a role in influencing an individual's ability to receive and process information; as they get older, a person's cognitive capacity and mindset will develop, so that their knowledge tends to increase.(Bahdad et al., 2023)

## Knowledge

Tabel 2.  
Respondents' Level of Knowledge

Knowledge	f	%
Good	42	42,9
Less	56	57,1

These results indicate that most adolescents have insufficient knowledge about promiscuous behaviour. This condition indicates that adolescents still have limited understanding of reproductive health, the risks of risky sexual behaviour, and the potential impacts, both in terms of physical, psychological, and social health. The predominance of respondents with insufficient knowledge may be a contributing factor to the emergence of promiscuous behaviour among adolescents.

Based on the results of the study, most respondents were in the category of lacking knowledge about promiscuity. This condition shows that adolescents' understanding of promiscuity, risk factors, and the resulting impacts is still inadequate. Knowledge is the basis for the formation of attitudes and behaviour, so that a lack of knowledge can increase adolescents' vulnerability to risky sexual behaviour. The lack of knowledge among adolescents may be influenced by the limited availability of comprehensive reproductive health education. Sex education in schools is generally still normative and does not discuss in depth the medical, psychological, and social consequences of promiscuity. Incomplete knowledge will result in misperceptions and impact on inappropriate health decision-making..

Cultural norms that consider discussions about sexuality to be taboo within the family contribute to low levels of knowledge among adolescents. Some parents feel uncomfortable or concerned that sex education may trigger early sexual behaviour, meaning that adolescents do not obtain accurate information from primary sources. As a result, adolescents tend to obtain knowledge from peers or social media, which may not be reliable. This is in line with the opinion that the lack of communication between parents and adolescents is related to low reproductive health knowledge. Meanwhile, the results of the study show that adolescents' knowledge of promiscuity is in the good category.(Biyanzah et al., 2024).

Low levels of knowledge about casual sex can increase the risk of premarital sexual behaviour, unplanned pregnancies, and the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). The World Health Organisation (WHO) states that limited sexual health literacy among adolescents is one of the factors contributing to high rates of teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted

infections. Adolescents who lack adequate understanding of the risks of casual sex tend to view such behaviour as normal and risk-free..(WHO, 2024). The results of this study are in line with research (Fadhlullah, M & Bambang, 2019) which found that adolescents with low levels of knowledge tend to have permissive attitudes towards promiscuity. Other studies have also shown a relationship between lack of knowledge and an increased tendency towards risky sexual behaviour among adolescents. This confirms that knowledge plays an important role in preventing promiscuous behaviour.(Kristianti & Widjayanti, 2021)

**Promiscuous Behaviour**

Table 3  
Promiscuous Behaviour

Promiscuous behaviour	f	%
Risky	66	67,3
Risk Free	32	32,7

The results of the study show that promiscuous behaviour among adolescents is largely low, at 67.3%. Promiscuous behaviour among adolescents that is classified as low indicates that some adolescents still engage in or tend to engage in sexual behaviour that is not in accordance with social, religious, or health norms. This behaviour includes premarital sexual activities, such as intimate kissing, petting, and sexual intercourse without marriage and without adequate protection. This lack of restraint indicates that adolescents have poor self-control and a lack of understanding of the risks involved.

Promiscuous behaviour among adolescents is one of the most common reproductive health problems. This behaviour includes various premarital sexual activities, ranging from light physical contact to sexual intercourse without marriage and without adequate protection. The emergence of promiscuous behaviour among adolescents is inseparable from the characteristics of adolescence, which are marked by a high level of curiosity, a search for identity, and significant biological and psychological changes..(Kristianti & Widjayanti, 2021). Promiscuous behaviour among adolescents is influenced by various factors, one of which is a lack of knowledge about sexuality and reproductive health. Adolescents who do not understand the risks and consequences of premarital sex tend to engage in inappropriate sexual behaviour. Sexual behaviour occurs based on individual urges and thoughts. Needs, desires and satisfaction are the main factors driving sexual activity.(Hanifah et al., 2022).

Table 4.  
The Relationship Between Knowledge and Adolescents' Free Sexual Behavior

Perilaku	Tingkat Pengetahuan				Total	p value	OR	
	less		good					
	f	%	f	%				
Risk	19	59,4	13	40,6	32	32,7	0,021	2,7
Non Risk	23	34,8	43	65,2	66	67,3		

The results showed that 59.4% of adolescents had inadequate behavior and inadequate knowledge, 32.7% had inadequate behavior and adequate knowledge, 34.8% had adequate behavior and inadequate knowledge, and 67.3% had adequate behavior and adequate knowledge. There was a significant relationship between knowledge and promiscuity among adolescents, as indicated by a p-value of 0.021 (p < 0.05). This means that there is a statistically significant relationship between adolescents' level of knowledge about promiscuity and their promiscuity behavior. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis in this study is accepted. Insufficient knowledge increases the risk of promiscuity 2.71 times higher than those with adequate knowledge (OR=2.71).

Knowledge is a predisposing factor that plays a significant role in shaping a person's behavior. Adolescents with poor knowledge about promiscuity tend to be less aware of the risks and

impacts, such as unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, and psychological and social impacts. Conversely, adolescents with adequate knowledge are generally better able to control themselves and avoid risky sexual behavior.

This significant relationship indicates that the lower an adolescent's knowledge, the greater the tendency to engage in unhealthy promiscuous sexual behavior. This lack of knowledge can lead adolescents to misperceive promiscuity, viewing it as normal and underestimating its potential consequences. Sarwono (2019) states that during adolescence, a strong sense of curiosity without adequate knowledge can lead individuals to engage in premarital sexual behavior. The results of this study align with research that found a relationship between knowledge levels and promiscuous sexual behavior in adolescents.. (Fadhullah, M & Bambang, 2019). Other research also suggests that adolescents with less knowledge are at higher risk of engaging in risky sexual behavior than those with more knowledge. This similarity of results reinforces the point that knowledge is a crucial factor in preventing promiscuous sexual behavior..(Hasdiiana & Asep, 2025).

Given this significant relationship, increasing adolescent knowledge through comprehensive sex education, reproductive health education, and the active role of parents and health workers is crucial. These efforts are expected to foster healthy, responsible sexual behavior that aligns with prevailing norms. Adequate knowledge and information plays a crucial role in shaping adolescents' future attitudes and behaviors. A lack of understanding of sexual health among adolescents can lead to various undesirable problems, such as teenage pregnancy, premature birth, birth defects, abortion, school dropout, early marriage, divorce, and an increased risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). The most dangerous impact on adolescents who do not understand the consequences of sexual intercourse is the transmission of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, the increase in deviant premarital sexual behavior among adolescents can negatively impact reproductive health, particularly for adolescent girls..(Bahdad et al., 2023);(Ramadhani & Sulaiman Samad, 2023).

Previous research also shows that promiscuous sexual behavior in adolescents is related to their level of knowledge and attitudes. The study found a significant relationship between the level of knowledge and attitudes regarding promiscuity and promiscuous sexual behavior in adolescents. Adolescents with poor knowledge and attitudes tend to engage in risky sexual behavior.(Permata Sari et al., 2024)

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the research results and discussion, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between knowledge levels and promiscuous sexual behavior in adolescents. Adolescents with low knowledge about promiscuity tend to exhibit unhealthy and risky sexual behavior, while adolescents with good knowledge tend to have healthier and more responsible sexual behavior. This is evidenced by the  $p$ -value = 0.021 ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating a statistically significant relationship. Thus, knowledge levels play a significant role in shaping adolescent sexual behavior.

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