ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSATIVE FACTORS AND IMPACTS OF FREE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR AMONG ADOLESCENTS: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract
Free sexual behavior among Indonesian adolescents has become a complex social and health problem influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors include limited knowledge of reproductive health, weak self-control, emotional impulses, and low levels of religiosity. External factors involve peer influence, disharmonious family environments, exposure to social media, and the lack of formal sex education. This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method using 25 national and international journal articles published between 2015 and 2025 to analyze the causes and impacts of free sexual behavior among adolescents. The findings reveal that inadequate reproductive knowledge, peer pressure, and exposure to unhealthy sexual content on digital media are the main contributing factors to such behavior. The impacts include an increased risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unwanted pregnancies, psychological disorders such as depression and guilt, and a decline in academic achievement. This review emphasizes the importance of collaboration among families, schools, and health professionals in providing comprehensive sex education from an early age to help adolescents develop an adequate understanding and strong self-control. Open, ethical, and culturally appropriate sex education, along with sufficient supervision from families and social environments, is essential to reduce the risks of free sexual behavior and its negative consequences among young people.
Keywords: free sexual behavior, adolescents, causal factors, impacts, reproductive health

INTRODUCTION

Adolescents are the nation's future generation who are in a transitional stage from childhood to adulthood, characterized by significant biological, psychological, and social changes. During this period, adolescents tend to experience a high level of curiosity, including in sexual matters. These changes can lead to risky behaviors such as premarital sexual activity if not balanced with adequate self-control and knowledge (Farwati et al., 2023). Research shows that one of the main causes of adolescent sexual risk behavior is the lack of knowledge regarding reproductive health. As many as 59.6% of adolescents possess poor knowledge about reproduction and the consequences of premarital sexual relations (Suharti et al., 2016). This condition is worsened by the weak role of families and educational environments in providing comprehensive sexual education.

Adolescent sexual behavior is part of reproductive development, which, if not properly managed, can lead to serious psychosocial problems such as depression, teenage pregnancy, and social role confusion. A study examining risk factors influencing adolescent sexual behavior among vocational high school students in Rise, Cirebon, found that 29% engaged in risky sexual activities such as hugging, touching sensitive body parts, and masturbation. Significant related factors included parental education, knowledge, attitudes, relationship status, place of residence, peer influence, and exposure to mass media. The most dominant factor was peer influence (OR = 4.9). The study emphasized the importance of parental

education and supervision, as well as limiting environmental influences on adolescent behavior (Bulukumba & Arfiani, 2023).

The COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on adolescent sexual behavior in Indonesia. Distance learning policies and increased internet use expanded access to pornographic content, while access to reproductive health services declined. As a result, the rates of premarital sexual activity and unintended pregnancy increased. This study mapped the factors influencing adolescent premarital sexual behavior during the pandemic, including knowledge, attitudes, communication media, peer influence, and family roles. The findings revealed that low knowledge, negative attitudes, the influence of social media and peers, as well as poor family communication and supervision, played key roles in increasing risky sexual behavior among adolescents (Collins et al., 2021).

In addition to knowledge-related factors, peer influence and the development of information technology also play significant roles in shaping adolescent sexual behavior. Adolescents often obtain sexual information from the internet, social media, or peers without proper filtering (Ramadhani et al., 2023). According to Siti Indah Dewi Pratiwi, Aning Subiyatin, and Jakarta (2025), repeated exposure to pornographic content can lower self-control and increase the desire to engage in risky sexual behavior.

Psychological factors such as curiosity, feelings of love, and social pressure from partners also trigger free sexual behavior. Research by Di et al. (n.d.) showed that 42.5% of adolescents engaged in sexual activity due to emotional impulses and an inability to refuse a partner's advances. Similar results were found by Siti Indah Dewi Pratiwi, Aning Subiyatin, and Jakarta (2025), who emphasized that such behavior is often carried out without understanding the health or moral consequences.

From an external perspective, the role of family and social environment is crucial in determining adolescent behavior. Families with open communication and strong religious values have been shown to reduce the tendency toward risky sexual behavior (Ramadhani et al., 2023). Conversely, families lacking harmony and attention tend to increase the risk of deviant behaviors (Juli et al., 2022). The consequences of free sexual behavior extend beyond physical issues such as unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases; they also include psychological and social effects. Adolescents involved in such behaviors are at risk of stress, guilt, depression, and social relationship problems (Pebrianti & Maryanti, 2021). In the educational context, this behavior can also lead to decreased motivation for learning and academic achievement (Dedyansyah et al., 2023).

Based on these phenomena, systematic efforts are needed to comprehensively understand the causes and impacts of free sexual behavior among adolescents. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach was chosen to integrate findings from previous studies, providing a comprehensive overview and serving as a foundation for policy recommendations in adolescent education and health in Indonesia. Thus, this study aims to identify the dominant causal factors of free sexual behavior among adolescents and its consequences, to encourage the development of appropriate intervention strategies through educational approaches and strengthened family roles.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, a research method conducted through the identification, evaluation, and synthesis of previous studies relevant to a specific topic in a systematic, transparent, and structured manner. This approach was chosen because it provides a comprehensive overview of the causal factors and impacts of adolescent risky sexual behavior based on various previous research findings. The method refers to the

PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines, which are used to ensure that each stage of the review is carried out systematically and is scientifically accountable.

RESEARCH RESULTS

This review was conducted on 25 national and international journals that discuss the causal factors and impacts of premarital sexual behavior among adolescents. The analysis was carried out through the identification, selection, and synthesis of data in accordance with the predetermined inclusion criteria.

The results of the literature review are presented in the following table:

Table 1. Literature Review

R	Authors & Year	Research Title	Research Objectives	Main Findings	Study Relevance
1	(Suharti et al., 2016)	Low Reproductive Health Knowledge as a Cause of Premarital Sexual Behavior Among Adolescents	Quantitative, Cross-sectional	To analyze the relationship between the level of reproductive health knowledge and the tendency toward premarital sexual behavior among adolescents.	There is a significant relationship between reproductive health knowledge and premarital sexual behavior (p = 0.001).
2	(Ningrum, 2022)	The Risk Sexual Behavior of Adolescents Reviewed Based on the Health Belief Model	Quantitative, Cross-sectional	To examine the Health Belief Model (HBM) factors perceived susceptibility, self-efficacy, and cues to action related to risky sexual behavior.	Self-efficacy, perceived susceptibility, and cues to action were found to have a significant relationship with risky sexual behavior.
3	(Bulukumba & Arfiani, 2023)	Factors Influencing Free Sexual Behavior Among Adolescents	Quantitative	To identify the dominant factors (e.g., media exposure, peer interaction) influencing premarital sexual behavior.	Media exposure and peer interaction were found to be the dominant factors contributing to free sexual behavior.
4	(Collins et al., 2021)	The Relationship Between Self-Control and Peer Influence on Adolescent Sexual Behavior The Role of Family Communication in Adolescent Sexual Behavior in Palu City	Quantitative, Correlational Study	To examine the relationship between self-control and peer pressure on the tendency of sexual behavior.	Low self-control and peer pressure were found to increase the likelihood of engaging in free sexual behavior.
5	(Ramadhani et al., 2023)	The Role of Family Communication in Adolescent Behavior	Quantitative, Survey	To assess the influence of family communication quality on adolescent sexual behavior.	Open family communication was shown to reduce free sexual behavior by up to 65%.
6	(Juli et al., 2022)	The Relationship Between Family Environment and Social Media on	Quantitative	To analyze the combined influence of family environment and social media exposure on adolescent sexual behavior.	Weak parental supervision and social media exposure were identified as significant factors contributing to sexual behavior.

		Adolescent Sexual Behavior			
7	(Pebrianti & Maryanti, 2021)	The Influence of Knowledge and Attitude on Adolescent Sexual Behavior	Quantitative	To examine the role of knowledge and attitudes in shaping adolescent sexual behavior.	Good knowledge has a positive influence on healthy sexual attitudes and behaviors.
8	(Tangerang, 2019)	The Role of Sex Education in Preventing Free Sexual Behavior Among High School Students	Qualitative, Case Study	To explore the effectiveness of sex education programs in schools on student behavior.	School-based sex education increases awareness and reduces risky sexual behavior.
9	(Siti Indah Dewi Pratiwi1, Aning Subiyatin2 & Jakarta, 2025)	The Influence of Pornographic Media Exposure on Adolescent Sexual Behavior	Quantitative	To assess the effect of pornography exposure on changes in adolescent attitudes and sexual behavior.	Exposure to pornographic content significantly increases adolescents' sexual desire.
10	(Azian et al., 2020)	The Relationship Between Religious Values and Premarital Sexual Behavior Among Adolescents	Quantitative	To analyze the correlation between religiosity and premarital sexual practices.	High religiosity values decrease the tendency toward free sexual behavior.
11	(Okah et al., 2023)	Determinants of Adolescent Sexual Behavior in Nigeria	Quantitative	To identify social determinants and parental control factors influencing adolescent sexual behavior in the Nigerian context.	Social factors, parental control, and education influence adolescent sexual behavior.
12	(Halid, 2022)	Determinants of Sexual Behavior Among Adolescents	Quantitative, Survey	To examine determinants of adolescent sexual behavior through a cross-sectional survey.	Lack of moral guidance from families worsens adolescent sexual behavior.
13	(Lamia Abdulgalil Saif	Factors Associated with Premarital Sex Among	Quantitative	To identify factors associated with premarital sex among adolescents.	72% of adolescents admitted to engaging in sexual behavior due to a lack of sex education.

	Ali Al-amri et al., 2024)	Adolescents in Ebonyi State			
14	(Edisi, 2025)	The Relationship Between Peer Influence and Sexual Behavior Among High School Adolescents	Quantitative	To examine the influence of peer pressure and dating patterns on high school students' sexual behavior.	Peer pressure and permissive dating styles increase free sexual behavior.
15	(Dedyansyah et al., 2023)	The Influence of Social Media on Free Sexual Behavior Among Adolescents in Malang City	Quantitative	To analyze the role of social media as a triggering factor of adolescent sexual behavior in local contexts.	Social media shapes sexual behavior through imitation and normalization.
16	(Mardiani et al., 2024)	Analysis of Social Factors Affecting Adolescent Sexual Behavior	Qualitative	To explore dominant social factors that drive adolescent sexual behavior qualitatively.	Peer association and social support are dominant social influences.
17	(Harwati & Laksmini, 2022)	The Impact of Free Sexual Behavior on Adolescents' Mental Health	Qualitative	To examine the psychological consequences of free sexual behavior among adolescents.	Results show impacts such as depression, guilt, and decreased learning motivation.
18	(Syam et al., 2023)	The Role of Parents in Preventing Free Sex Among Adolescents	Quantitative	To investigate the effectiveness of parental roles (communication & supervision) in prevention.	Parental supervision and communication effectively reduce sexual behavior risks.
19	(Okunade, 2018)	Youth Reproductive Health Knowledge and Risky Sexual Behavior	Quantitative	To examine the relationship between reproductive health knowledge and risky sexual behavior.	Low reproductive health knowledge increases the risk of sexually transmitted infections.
20	(Rahmah, et al., 2017)	Hubungan Self-Control dan Norma Sosial terhadap Perilaku Seksual Remaja	Quantitative	To assess the contribution of self-control and social norms in determining adolescent sexual behavior.	Social norms and self-control act as behavioral regulators.
21	(Thepthien, 2022)	Dampak Seks Bebas terhadap Prestasi Akademik Siswa SMA	Quantitative	To examine the relationship between sexual involvement and academic indicators.	Sexually active students experience decreased concentration and academic performance.

22	(Farwati et al., 2023)	The Impact of Free Sex on Academic Achievement Among High School Students	Quantitative	Quantitative To analyze the correlation between pornography exposure frequency and permissive attitudes toward sex.	A positive correlation exists between the frequency of pornography exposure and active sexual behavior.
23	(Di et al., n.d.)	The Relationship Between Pornography Exposure and Adolescent Sexual Attitudes	Quantitative	To assess the role of the school environment (rules, school culture) on student behavior.	A permissive school environment increases the likelihood of free sexual behavior.
24	(Bebas, 2022)	The Influence of School Environment on Adolescent Sexual Behavior	Quantitative	To examine the effect of structured sex education on students' attitudes toward sexuality.	Structured sex education significantly influences adolescents' healthy attitudes.
25	(Brillian et al., 2021)	The Relationship Between Sex Education and Attitudes Toward Sexuality Adolescents' Perceptions of Sexual Risk and the Role of Parent	Qualitative	To explore adolescents' risk perceptions and their relationship with parental roles.	High risk perception correlates with more controlled sexual behavior.

DISCUSSION

Based on the review of 25 analyzed journals, several key findings were identified regarding free sexual behavior among adolescents. First, the factors contributing to this behavior can be categorized into internal and external factors.

a. Internal factors

Internal factors are aspects that originate within the adolescents themselves, including knowledge, self-control, emotional drives, and level of religiosity. These factors play a significant role in shaping an individual's mindset and behavior when facing situations related to sexuality.

1) Low level of knowledge about reproductive health

A low level of knowledge about reproductive health causes adolescents to have a limited understanding of the consequences of engaging in sexual behavior irresponsibly. According to the Health Belief Model (HBM), an individual's health-related behavior is strongly influenced by their perception of the risks and benefits of an action (Rosenstock, 1974). Adolescents who lack sufficient knowledge about the dangers of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unintended pregnancy, and the psychological risks associated with free sexual behavior tend not to perceive such actions as hazardous. Several studies support this finding. For example, research by Andini (2022) showed that 72% of adolescents with low reproductive health knowledge exhibited permissive attitudes toward sexual behavior.

Researcher's assumption: Low sexual literacy impairs adolescents' ability to make wise decisions in controlling sexual impulses, as they do not fully recognize the medical and social consequences of such behavior..

2) Weak self-control

Self-control refers to an individual's ability to resist impulsive urges and delay immediate gratification in order to achieve long-term goals. According to Hirschi's social control theory (1969), individuals with weak self-control are more likely to violate social norms. In the context of free sexual behavior, low self-control makes adolescents less able to resist peer or partner invitations to engage in sexual activities beyond socially accepted boundaries.

Research by Utami & Rahayu (2021) found that adolescents with low self-control were twice as likely to engage in premarital sexual behavior compared to those with high self-control.

Researcher's assumption: Weak self-control arises because adolescents are still in a stage of psychological development where cognitive functions, particularly in the prefrontal cortex, are not fully matured, limiting their ability to regulate impulses and assess risks effectively.

3) Emotional impulses

Adolescence is characterized by heightened emotional impulses and curiosity toward the opposite sex. According to Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory (1968), adolescents are in the stage of identity versus role confusion, during which they strive to find their identity, including sexual orientation and interpersonal relationships. Strong emotional impulses, if not balanced by moral understanding and self-control, can trigger risky sexual behavior.

Research by Nurhidayah (2021) indicates that adolescents who frequently experience emotional stress and loneliness are more likely to seek relief through intimate relationships as a form of psychological compensation.

Researcher's assumption: Risky sexual behavior is often not merely the result of biological drives but also functions as a coping mechanism for stress, loneliness, and the search for an unstable self-identity.

4) Low religiosity

Religiosity plays an important role in shaping an individual's moral and ethical behavior. Social control theory also explains that religious values serve as an internal regulatory system guiding behavior according to social norms. Adolescents with low religiosity tend to lack clear moral boundaries in evaluating sexual behavior.

Research by Sari & Nugraha (2023) found that adolescents with low religious practice intensity exhibit permissive attitudes toward premarital sexual relations. Strong religiosity has been shown to be a protective factor against deviant behavior.

Researcher assumption: Low religiosity weakens internal value and normative systems, leaving adolescents without a strong spiritual foundation to resist temptations or social pressures that encourage risky sexual behavior.

b. External factors

In addition to internal factors, influences from outside the adolescent also play a major role in shaping their behavior. External factors include peer influence, family environment, exposure to social media, and lack of formal sex education in schools

1) Peer influence

According to Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), an individual's behavior is formed through observation, imitation, and social reinforcement. Adolescents who associate with peers who are permissive toward sexual behavior are likely to imitate such behavior to gain social acceptance.

Research by Putri & Handayani (2022) found that 68% of adolescents with peers engaging in risky sexual behavior were more likely to do the same. Researcher's assumption: Adolescents have a high need for social acceptance, so they often follow group behaviors without considering moral or health risks

2) Family environment

The family is the primary institution in shaping adolescent character. According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (1979), microenvironments such as the family have a direct influence on individual development. Families that are not harmonious, lack communication, or have busy parents tend to fail in providing adequate moral guidance and supervision. Research by Wulandari (2021) showed that adolescents raised in permissive parenting or broken homes are at higher risk of engaging in risky sexual behavior. Researcher's assumption: When love and attention needs are not met at home, adolescents tend to seek emotional warmth elsewhere, which can lead to unhealthy sexual behavior.

3) Exposure to social media

Social media has become a primary source of information and entertainment for adolescents. However, without supervision, adolescents can easily access pornographic or erotic content that triggers sexual arousal. According to the stimulus-response theory (Skinner, 1953), repeated visual exposure can form new behavioral associations, including deviant sexual behavior. Research by Rahmawati (2023) revealed that 75% of adolescents who frequently consume adult content on social media exhibited increased risky sexual behavior. Researcher assumption: Intensive, uncontrolled use of social media normalizes premarital sexual behavior, causing adolescents to perceive such behavior as acceptable or "modern."

4) Lack of formal sex education in schools
Formal sex education in schools plays a crucial role in providing scientific knowledge and balanced moral values regarding reproductive health. According to Green's health education theory (1980), knowledge is a predisposing factor that shapes health behavior. However, in many Indonesian schools, this topic is still considered taboo and not discussed openly. Research by Lestari & Hidayat (2022) found that schools that do not provide systematic sex education have higher levels of risky behavior among students. Researcher's assumption: The absence of formal sex education leads adolescents to seek information from unreliable sources such as social media or peers, creating misconceptions about sexuality. Religious values and family communication act as protective factors that can suppress risky behavior. Secondly, the impacts of adolescent free sexual behavior encompass physical, psychological, social, and academic aspects. Physical impacts include an increased risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV/AIDS, and unintended pregnancies. Psychological impacts involve depression, guilt, and disturbances in self-esteem. Social and academic impacts manifest as family conflicts, social stigma, and decreased motivation and academic performance. In general, such behavior is more prevalent among adolescents who have uncontrolled access to media, minimal family communication, and a permissive social environment.

DISCUSSION

The review of 25 journals indicates that adolescent free sexual behavior is a complex phenomenon influenced by multiple interrelated factors. Individual, social, and environmental elements all contribute to shaping these behavioral patterns. In general, low levels of knowledge about reproductive health are the primary cause, leaving adolescents unaware of the risks associated with sexual activity. This lack of understanding regarding health and social consequences often fosters a permissive attitude toward premarital sexual behavior.

Beyond knowledge, psychological factors such as weak self-control, emotional impulses, and the desire for peer recognition further reinforce the tendency toward free sexual behavior. Adolescents are in a developmental phase of identity formation, making them highly susceptible to the norms and behaviors of their social environment. Peer pressure and permissive dating practices make risky behavior increasingly difficult to avoid. In this context, social media also plays a significant role as both a source of information and exposure to behaviors that may conflict with moral and cultural values.

The family environment is a critical determinant in shaping adolescent behavior. Open communication and emotional closeness between parents and children have been shown to positively influence moral values and personal responsibility. Conversely, families that are closed off, busy, or disharmonious often fail to provide adequate guidance and supervision, leading adolescents to seek emotional fulfillment outside the home.

This phenomenon demonstrates that the rise in adolescent free sexual behavior is not only related to a lack of knowledge but also to an imbalance between easy access to information and readiness of moral values. The increasingly open flow of digital information broadens exposure to sexual behaviors without sufficient filtering. The absence of comprehensive sex education exacerbates the situation, as adolescents seek understanding from unreliable sources.

Preventive efforts should focus on strengthening comprehensive sex education, digital literacy, and moral value formation through synergy between families, schools, and communities. Sex education should be delivered openly, ethically, and in a culturally

appropriate manner so that adolescents understand sexuality from the perspectives of health and responsibility

CONCLUSION

Adolescent free sexual behavior is a phenomenon influenced by a combination of interrelated internal and external factors. Internal factors include low knowledge of reproductive health, weak self-control, emotional impulses, and low religiosity, while external factors encompass peer influence, a less harmonious family environment, exposure to social media, and limited formal sex education. Knowledge emerges as the dominant factor, leaving adolescents unaware of the health and social risks associated with free sexual behavior. The impacts are multidimensional, including an increased risk of sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancies, the emergence of stress and emotional disturbances, as well as social conflicts and decreased academic performance. Therefore, the role of families and educational institutions is crucial in prevention through open communication, comprehensive sex education, and cross-sector collaboration among families, schools, healthcare providers, and government to foster adolescents who are religious, healthy, and responsible.

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. Cross-sector collaboration is a strategic step in creating an environment that supports healthy sexual behavior among adolescents.