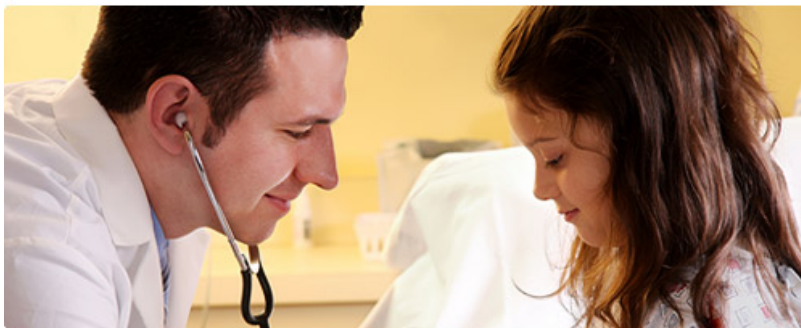




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# Emerging Premarital Sexual Behavior among Adolescent in Indonesia: The impact of Knowledge, Experience, and Media Use to Attitudes

Ira Nurmala<sup>1,2</sup>, Citra Ervina Ahiyanasari<sup>2</sup>, Muthmainnah<sup>2</sup>, Anggun Wulandari<sup>2</sup>, Yuli Puspita Devi<sup>2</sup>,  
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## Abstract

The number of premarital sexual behavior among adolescent is increasing around the globe. Research showed attitudes influence the increasing number of premarital sexual behavior among adolescent. However, there is a gap in understanding factors influencing the positive attitudes of adolescent. Therefore, this study aims to determine the three factors affecting attitudes (knowledge, experience, and access to media) to prevent premarital sex behavior among adolescent. This study was a quantitative research with cross-sectional design in determining the sample. The simple random sampling method was used and data were collected from 75 high school students of first, second, and third grade (15-19 years old). The knowledge, experience, and the use of media is helpful for adolescent but only to a certain extent. Their positive attitude formed due to other factors that is beyond the scope of this research. This study showed that positive attitudes of adolescent is necessary to help them preventing premarital sex behavior that leads to many health problems. Therefore, we need to revisit existing health programs for adolescent to reinforce their positive attitudes to help them making healthy life choices.

**Keywords:** *knowledge, experience, media, attitude, premarital sex*

## Introduction

Adolescence is the time when an individual starts showing secondary sexual signs until he/she reaches sexual maturity, this group includes individuals from the age range 10-19 years<sup>(1)</sup>. The development of significant sexual and physical changes in adolescents results in sexual attraction or encouragement towards the opposite sex. Premarital sex is a common issue of the current era among various sexual problems related to teenagers in Indonesia. Approximately 21 million girls aged 15-19 years in developing countries experience pregnancy

every year, and nearly half of these pregnancies (49%) are not desirable. Approximately 38 million girls aged 15-19 years are at risk of pregnancy and do not want children within the next two years<sup>(2)</sup>. In the year of 2012, Indonesia has a 14% unexpected pregnancy rate. This figure is greater when compared with the data from 2010 which is approximately 5.8%<sup>(3)</sup>. In 2008, Indonesia recorded 2.4 million abortions and among them, 21 % was performed in adolescence<sup>(4)</sup>.

The high number of unintended pregnancy events can be triggered by pre-marital sex behavior. The presumption that sex as taboo causes reluctance or embarrassment among adolescents in discussing reproductive health or sexual education with elders, especially with their family members. This Lack of sexual education cause adolescents to seek sexual knowledge from other sources such as peers, the internet, and

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media. This results in an unsafe sexual practice among teenagers, ultimately causing unwanted pregnancy leading to abortions<sup>(5)</sup>. Premarital sex that occurs in adolescents can be influenced by internal and external factors such as adolescent knowledge about reproductive health, emotional state, peer groups, and media influence. Sexual knowledge has a significant effect on premarital sexual behavior, lack of knowledge and vulnerable emotional conditions can increase chances of premarital sex which ultimately poses a threat to reproductive health and can even cause mortality<sup>(6)</sup>. Internal factors include knowledge level and education, while external factors include peer pressure and media influence. These factors have shown a significant relationship with adolescent sexual behavior in Indonesia<sup>(7)</sup>. In Addition, there was a significant influence on media, counselors, adolescent knowledge, courtship status, and peer influences in premarital sexual behavior<sup>(8)</sup>. The major external factors affecting sexual behavior are cell phones, media usage, internet, and pornographic videos<sup>(9,10)</sup>. In Indonesia adolescents who have watched pornographic films, 62.7% of them admitted losing virginity and 21.2% had an abortion. These figures indicated the crucial role of the internet in increasing premarital sex and unwanted pregnancy<sup>(11)</sup>. East Java is the province of Indonesia, which is among the top three largest cities with the highest number of adolescent issues such as HIV and AIDS, drugs, and unwanted pregnancies<sup>(12)</sup>. Also, premarital sex was one of the reasons teenagers get married early<sup>(13)</sup>. Therefore, this study aimed to understand the influence of knowledge, experiences, and media factors on the attitude of adolescents to prevent premarital sex behavior.

**Materials and Methods**

Data for this article come from a cross-sectional study of 182 unmarried high school students. Due to the sensitive issue of this study, out of 182 participants, 75 were willing to participate in this study.

Data was collected using a preapproved questionnaire. Informed consent for participation in this study was obtained by the participant’s teacher because the participants are students (15-19 years old). The consent was written by the teacher as the participant’s willingness to join this study.

Questionnaires used in this study were taken from validated questions regarding attitudes from the Theory of Planned behavior. In this study, we have measured variables that are directly affecting pre-marital sex behavior such as sexual knowledge, experience, and media use. Data analysis was done by using the Gamma correlation test with a significance level ( $\alpha$ ) of 0.05.

**Results**

Table 1 showed high school students have sufficient knowledge about the prevention of premarital sexual behavior. Out of 75 students, 71 (94.7%) reported understand premarital sex behavior and its prevention. Further, only 49 students (65.3%) reported having the premarital sexual behavior experience. Additionally, Out of 75 students, only 50.7 percent of them reported using media to look for information regarding the premarital sex behavior and its prevention.

**Table 1 Distribution level of independent variables in high school students of 2017.**

No	Variables	Categories						Total	
		Good		Enough		Less Good			
		n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%
1	Knowledge	71	94.7	4	5.3	0	0.0	75	100.0
2	Experience	49	65.3	8	10.7	18	24.0	75	100.0
3	Media Use	38	50.7	22	29.3	15	20.0	75	100.0

**Table 2. Attitude level of high school students on prevention of premarital sex behavior**

No	Attitude level	n	%
1	Very positive	74	98.7
2	Positive	1	1.3
3	Less positive	0	0.0
	Total	75	100.0

**Table 3. Statistic Test Results of Knowledge, Experiences, Media Usage on Adolescent Attitudes to Prevent Premarital Sex Behavior in 2017.**

Variabel	Attitude						Total		T	p-value
	Less Positive		Positive		Very Positive					
	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%		
<b>Knowledge</b>										
Good	0	0	1	1,4	70	93,3	71	94,7	1,000	0,361
Enough	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,0		
Less Good	0	0	0	0	4	5,3	4	5,3		
<b>Experience</b>										
Good	0	0	1	1,4	48	64,0	49	65,4	1,000	0,314
Enough	0	0	0	0	8	10,6	8	10,6		
Less Good	0	0	0	0	18	24,0	18	24,0		
<b>Media Usage</b>										
Good/frequently	0	0	0	0	38	100	38	50,7	-1,000	0,142
Enough	0	0	0	0	22	100	22	29,3		
Less	0	0	1	1,4	18,6	93,3	15	20,0		

Furthermore, Table 2 indicates most students possessed positive attitude toward preventing premarital sex behavior. Table 3 is an extended version of table 1, in which we have categorized each independent variable into three different levels. Based on the statistical tests, the previous experience of the students has no impact to their attitude to prevent premarital sex. The previous experience of these students were mainly holding hands, hugging, and kissing. In regards to the use of media, result showed that it did not affect adolescents' attitudes to prevent premarital sex behavior.

## Discussions

Characteristics of participants by age indicate that most of them were in early adolescence (15-18 years old) of 98.6% and 1.4% were in late adolescence. The participants were from grades 10, 11, and 12. In the middle adolescent phase teens began to test new things as a form of self-discovery<sup>(14)</sup>. Adolescent age will affect a person's maturity either physically, sexually, mentally, or socially<sup>(15)</sup>. The characteristics of participants based on the level of education in this study indicate that the majority of participants were from grade 10. At this level, girls still experience the transition from junior to senior high school. This is the phase when a child makes a new connection apart from family members and this sudden change in environment can push them into the dark side of their life. In Africa, lots common reasons for having premarital sex are peer groups pressures of 50.0% and monetary gains of 27.5%<sup>(16)</sup>.

Based on Table 3, the results of statistical tests show that there is no influence between knowledge and adolescent attitudes in preventing premarital sex behavior. Previous study states that there is no relationship between pre-marital sex knowledge level and adolescent attitudes with premarital sex behavior in the high school students<sup>(17)</sup>. However, the results of this study do not line up with other studies, which states a significant relationship between knowledge and premarital sexual attitudes of adolescents. These studies show adolescents who have good knowledge are more likely to avoid premarital sexual behavior<sup>(18)</sup>. Based on research results in Kenya, teenagers in schools have a conservative attitude towards premarital sex<sup>(19)</sup>.

Students lacked true information related to premarital sex, so they still thought that premarital sex

was a pre-marital relationship<sup>(20)</sup>. From our results, it can be seen that the problem of premarital sex, is influenced by the attitude or behavior of adolescents, and our study does not account for that. The factors which affect individual are mainly parental negligence, parental divorce, bad behavior of guardians, and any rift among family members. Further, other affecting factors might be an association with sexually active peers and pornographic contents<sup>(21)</sup>. Previous experience will have a direct effect on an individual's behavior. Besides, someone who is considered important or someone who means special will greatly influence the formation of individual attitudes toward something<sup>(22)</sup>. The influence of culture has a major influence on the formation of one's attitude and behavior actions. In Indonesia, sex was considered taboo for ages, however, there has been a revolution that leading the free attitude and behavior of adolescents and promoting premarital sexual intercourse<sup>(23)</sup>. Based on the results of statistical tests in Table 3, it is known that the experience of the students did not prevent premarital sex. Experience widely gained from the sense of sight and hearing and can affect a person's knowledge by motivating or demotivating her/herself for specific actions<sup>(24)</sup>. One of the major pathways of getting experience would be in communication with others. However, in this study, we did not investigate adolescent communication with any reference groups that potentially influence their health.

Teens' communication with medical or health workers regarding sexual behavior, sexuality, and protective behavior were essential to support the prevention of sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies. The presence of such communications may enhance the correct knowledge of sexuality<sup>(25)</sup>. Besides, the quality of parent-child relationships with children has a meaningful effect on reducing teenage intentions to have sex<sup>(26)</sup>. Quality of parental communication allows as an effective target for family-based interventions aimed at fostering adolescent sexual health<sup>(27)</sup>. The level of religiosity plays a powerful role in one's life. This is related to the dimension of experience related to the consequences of beliefs, ritual practices, knowledge, and experience of the religion held. The higher a person's religiosity, the lower the risk of premarital sex<sup>(28)</sup>. Attitudes gained through experience will have a direct bearing on behavior.



Based on the results of statistical tests in Table 3, it is known that the use of media does not affect adolescent attitudes to prevent premarital sex behavior. The results of this study were lined up with other studies that found no relationship between information about premarital sex and adolescent attitudes toward premarital sex<sup>(29)</sup>. Students who use media to obtain information about premarital sex can increase their chances to prevent premarital sex. Whereas, students who use media for watching pornography content can increase the risk of premarital sexual behavior. A total of 70% of female students, said that they often use the media to obtain information or for entertainment. However, very few students use the media to obtain information about premarital sex. The majority of students in our study were smartphone users so they can easily access all the information from the internet. As the technological sophistication goes on, it is necessary to supervise and limit the use of media by adolescents, so that we can direct them towards the positive side of media. Therefore, in this parental supervision could play a major role and ultimately can decrease the case of premarital pregnancies<sup>(27)</sup>. Based on research results in Nigeria, it is known that 84% think that adolescents should be given sexuality education. Sexuality education must be provided for adolescents in schools through their choices and a reliable source of information<sup>(30)</sup>.

Efforts to prevent premarital sex need to be done consistently and comprehensively by various parties. This effort should be carried out simultaneously from the regional to the national level<sup>(31)</sup>. The development of adolescent health programs must be carried out comprehensively and implemented by all levels of stakeholders ranging from decision making, provider, user, and representative<sup>(32)</sup>. The results of research on stakeholder mapping showed that not all stakeholders had an attitude of support and active involvement<sup>(33)</sup>.

### Conclusions

Knowledge, experience, and media use does not affect adolescent attitudes to prevent premarital sex, knowing that there may be other more influential. These findings are expected to contribute to reducing a variety of adolescent problems caused by premarital sex behavior in Surabaya in Indonesia. In addition, we must analyze adolescent needs in efforts to prevent premarital

sex and analyze the role of various stakeholders in the implementation of adolescent health programs. Therefore, we need to revisit existing health programs for adolescent to reinforce their positive attitudes to help them making healthy life choices.

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