



Original Article

The Role of Mothers' Interpersonal Communication with Adolescent Girls regarding Sex Education in Aceh Province, Indonesia

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Abstract: The issue of free sex is not an old story, and this incident happens almost every day to friends, family, neighbors, and even on social media. Free sex is a global issue that still occurs today and is reported in various countries, including the Aceh region of Indonesia. The problem is that discussing sex education is still considered taboo by some mothers, even with their teenage daughters. This research aims to describe (1) An understanding of sex education, (2) How adolescents receive sex education, and (3) How the role of interpersonal communication between mothers and adolescent girls is related to conveying knowledge about sex education. This research uses qualitative methods using several references from journals and books. The research results show that: (1) Sex education is a knowledge skill that must be immediately given to teenagers regarding sexual behavior to avoid anything that can cause negative effects. (2) Teenagers need information about sex education issues from those closest to them, including mothers. (3) The role of mothers is crucial in providing sex education to teenage girls so that they are not affected by free sex, even though this is considered taboo.

Keywords: Communication, sex education, Adolescent girl



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1. Introduction

The issue of free sex is not an old story; we identify this incident almost every day from friends, family, neighbors, and on social media. Casual sex is a global issue that still occurs today and is in the news in various countries. In several countries, studies of teenage pregnancies are still common. [Yakubu & Salisu \(2018\)](#) stated that pregnancy rates in Sub-Saharan Africa continue to increase. [Krugue et al. \(2016\)](#) stated that teenage pregnancy is still a problem, and high rates of teenage pregnancy in Africa are reported. In 2002, New Zealand's teenage pregnancy rate (live births and abortions) was the third highest in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development ([Woodward, 2007](#)). Statistics from UNICEF in 2013 show no decline in the teenage birth rate in almost a decade. So, it can be said that until now, the rate of free sex is still high. In developing countries, around 16 million girls aged 15-19 years and 2.5 million girls under the age of 16 give birth every year. Generally, complications of pregnancy and childbirth are the leading

causes of their death. Every year, nearly 3.9 million girls aged 15-19 have unsafe abortions that ultimately end their lives. A teenage mother (aged 10-19 years) has a higher risk of developing eclampsia, endometritis during the puerperium, and systemic infections than mothers aged 20 years and over. This higher risk also impacts adolescent mortality (United Nations Educational, 2018).

Meanwhile, according to the Indonesian Central Statistics Agency, the rate of early marriage in 2018 in Babylon was 14.22 percent, and Bangka Belitung was in 8th place out of 34 provinces. In 2019, it increased to 15.48 percent, ranking 11th out of 34 provinces. Meanwhile, in 2020, the rate of early marriage experienced a reasonably high increase, namely 18.78 percent, and ranked 1st out of 34 provinces (Rahayu, 2022). In Yogyakarta, one of the causes of early marriage is that children or teenagers who do not receive strong provisions will fall into promiscuity (Hanifah et al., 2022). In Southeast Sulawesi Province, based on data from the 2013 Indonesian Demographic and Population Survey (SDKI), it was recorded that 60% of unmarried teenage respondents admitted to having had an abortion, intentional or spontaneous (miscarriage), when experiencing an unintended pregnancy. Meanwhile, 40% of respondents continued the pregnancy until birth, including those who had tried abortion but failed. Furthermore, it was reported that as many as 93.7 percent of junior high school (SMP) and senior high school (SMA) teenagers had kissed or had sex. The KPAI survey showed that 62.7 percent of junior high school teenagers had had sex (Haggstromnordin et al., 2002). Based on research conducted by a mental specialist at RSIA Limijati, Elvine Gunawan, on 60 teenage girls in one of the sub-districts on the border of Bandung City, it was found that 56 percent of underage teenagers under 15 years old had had promiscuous relationships outside of marriage. As a result, many of these children are forced to drop out of school and enter early marriage (Birchall, 2018).

The case of child marriage in Indonesia is very worrying for many parties. From data from religious courts regarding requests for dispensation from child marriage, it was found that in 2021, there were 65 thousand cases recorded, and in 2022, there were 55 thousand applications. Submission of applications for marriage at a child's age is more often caused by the female applicant being pregnant beforehand and the factor of encouragement from parents who want their child to get married immediately because they already have a close friend/boyfriend (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, 2023). From the data found above, there are still many cases of sexual freedom in Indonesia, with several reports of increased cases from year to year. Meanwhile, Aceh is one of the cities that will be researched. This research also has several results: one of the cases reported by News detik.com. On March 13, 2014, the Aceh Islamic Sharia Police arrested two women who claimed to be Lesbians (like those of the same sex) in Deah Village. Lamglumpang District. Meuraxa Banda Aceh City (Amrullah, 2018). Of course, there are many factors why this promiscuity causes unwanted pregnancies.

Early marriage can occur due to factors such as poverty and economic problems. Education, traditions, and religion are still profoundly rooted (Hanifah et al., 2022). A study by Safitri & Hulaiyah (2022) mentioned that adolescent promiscuity can also be caused by increasingly advanced technology and modern global economic factors. Other factors that because promiscuity include lack of religious knowledge, minimal parental supervision, family economics, broken homes, social media, and environmental conditions. In such a context, the peer environment is very influential in forming a person's character. For teenagers, friends are relationships that are the most comfortable place to express their feelings. Therefore, someone must be selective in looking for friends (Chambliss, 1965). On the basis of the explanation above, Aceh is a symbol of the veranda of Mecca using Islamic law, and many teenagers are still involved in promiscuity. Almost all references show a relationship between parents' communication and their teenage children's promiscuity. Parents, especially mothers, must be aware of their role in influencing the sexual behavior of their teenage daughters (Mcneely et al., 2002). Perhaps the verbal and nonverbal messages that mothers convey to their sons about sex are not as clear as those that mothers convey to their daughters.

2. Literature Review

On the basis of data from the World Health Organization (WHO), 33 percent of teenagers in Indonesia have sex (Najib & Nugroho, 2020). Meanwhile, according to research by the Ministry of Health RI, 58 percent penetrated age 18 to 21 from these results. And 2.3 million cases of abortion per year, 30 percent of which are carried out (Kortsmitt et al., 2021). According to the Secretary of the Bandung City Education Office, Tantan, one of the factors causing many children to have free sex is globalization and the influence of social media (soss) (Arzamani et al., 2022). It aligns with the study by Shin et al. (2019). Smartphone availability in elementary schools was found to have reached 37.2% for elementary school students and 74.2% for high school students, providing a medium for some elementary school students to be exposed to indiscriminate sexual content. In a study conducted by Lestari (2019), Survey Indonesian Demography and Health (SDKI) (2012) regarding adolescent reproductive health shows that nationally, there is an increase in the number of adolescents who have had premarital sexual relations. Have had premarital sexual relations. Meanwhile, the 2017 SKEEL results were only around 7% or 3 million teenagers (Wirawan, 2014). Adolescence is characterized by rapid physical and cognitive growth along with sexual maturation. Parents are required to educate teens about sex and relationship issues with age-appropriate information using culturally relevant methods and providing scientifically accurate, non-judgmental information (Onyeodi et al., 2022).

In a study conducted by [Lestari \(2019\)](#), Survey Indonesian Demography and Health (SDKI) (2012) regarding adolescent reproductive health shows that nationally, there is an increase in the number of adolescents who have had premarital sexual relations. Meanwhile, the 2017 SKEI results were only around 7% or 3 million teenagers ([Wirawan, 2014](#)). Of course, there are many factors why this promiscuity causes unwanted pregnancies. Early marriage can occur due to factors such as poverty and economic problems. Education, traditions, and religion are still deeply rooted ([Hanifah et al., 2022](#)). Like research by [Safitri & Hulaiyah \(2022\)](#), Adolescent promiscuity can also be caused by increasingly advanced technology and modern global economic factors. Other factors that because promiscuity include lack of religious knowledge, minimal parental supervision, family economics, broken homes, social media, and environmental conditions. In such a context, the peer environment is very influential in forming a person's character. For teenagers, friends are relationships that are the most comfortable place to express their feelings. Therefore, someone must be selective in looking for friends ([Bellotti, 2008](#)). Teenagers certainly need information, including sex education, and good communication will undoubtedly make it easier for teenagers to interact. Knowledge about sex education can run optimally if the family has adequate and quality communication ([Sejati & Mufida, 2021](#)).

3. Materials and Methods

This research uses qualitative methods using a literature review—references cited from various journals related to the topic. Qualitative research generally attempts to understand occurring events using a non-numerical, interpretive, and iterative approach. However, there are circumstances where qualitative research is used to understand events that have not occurred naturally, such as its use in experimental designs. The analysis includes numerical data, uses description rather than interpretation, and proceeds linearly and iteratively. These diverse approaches and their applications make qualitative research is rich and complex ([Whiffin et al., 2022](#)).

4. Results

4.1. Sex education

According to [Garoutte \(2022\)](#), sex education is a teaching process not once in a lifetime. Still, a continuous understanding is given to children regarding attitudes, values, and the development of reproductive organs and how to care for them. Sex education is a teaching process that is not once in a lifetime but is a continuous understanding given to children regarding attitudes, values, and development of reproductive organs and how to maintain them. The United Nations defines sex education as a curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical, and social aspects of sexuality. Sexuality education teaches about human sexuality, including intimate relationships, human sexual anatomy, sexual reproduction, sexually transmitted infections, sexual activity, sexual orientation, gender identity, abstinence, contraception, and reproductive rights and responsibilities ([Breuner et al., 2016](#)). According to [Yusuf \(2020\)](#), sex education is given from an early age (and in adolescence) with the following objectives: (1) Helping children understand biological topics such as growth, puberty, and pregnancy. (2) Preventing children from acts of violence. (3) Reduces guilt, shame, and anxiety due to sexual acts. (4) Prevents underage girls from getting pregnant. (5) Prevents underage girls from getting involved in sexual relations to reduce cases of infection through sex. (6) Helping young people who ask questions about the roles of men and women in society.

Also, [Ulwan \(2007\)](#), sexual education is an effort to increase awareness and teach children about sexual issues to avoid unwanted negative influences. According to [Ulwan \(2007\)](#), sexual education aims to give children a correct understanding of the context of Islamic ideology and teachings in acting and behaving according to their sexual nature. According to [Ulwan \(2007\)](#), there are four phases in providing sexual education to children: a) Tamyiz era/pre-puberty, b) Morahaqah era/puberty, c) Balig/adolescent era, and d) Youth era. According to [Ulwan \(2007\)](#), the rules taught to children in providing sexual education are as follows: a) Ethics of asking permission, b) Viewing ethics, c) Avoiding sexual stimulation, d) Teaching the law to children at adolescent and adult levels, e) Marriage and relationships sexual, f) Isti'faf (self-care) for those who are unable to marry, g) Explaining sexual matters to children openly. From these principles, it can be seen that the concept of sexual education, according to [Ulwan \(2007\)](#), is to prevent children from doing bad things. Then parents realize and understand that sex education is not taboo but true knowledge following Islamic law.

4.2. Adolescents' Acceptance of Sex

Many teenagers ultimately lack knowledge about what sexuality means if the information they obtain is not accurate or adequate ([Freeman et al., 2018](#)). It is in line with what was submitted by [Nurdianti et al. \(2021\)](#). It is hoped that teenagers will seek information about sexuality correctly and from trusted sources to avoid deviant sexual behavior. Receiving the wrong education or inappropriate information can profoundly affect a teenager's life and future ([Joodaki et al., 2020](#)). Acceptance of adolescent sex education is needed to monitor changes in access to information ([Lindberg et](#)

al., 2016) because adolescents often search for information about sexual health on the Internet even though it is mostly used as a means to meet and communicate with friends (Olumide & Ojengbede, 2016). A study by Lindberg et al., (2016) highlights the inequities in receiving sex education that can leave young people vulnerable to health problems and violate their right to receive accurate and timely information. Adolescents are highly interested in understanding the feelings and perceptions of the opposite sex. Gaining this knowledge can be beneficial in building emotionally and physically satisfying relationships (Bauer et al., 2020). It can be said that there is a negative relationship between religiosity and free sexual behavior (Hidayatuddin et al., 2018). The higher the religiosity, the lower the free sexual behavior. Conversely, the lower the religiosity, the higher the free sexual behavior (Andisti & Ritandiyono, 2011). The higher the student's self-control, the more negative attitudes (disapproval) teenagers will have toward free sexual behavior (Putri, 2019). Although quite a few teenagers are willing to have casual sex to increase their finances (Biney & Dadoo, 2015).

Most teenagers' knowledge has increased, and students can understand how to prevent sexual behavior after health education using Short Education Movie (SEM) media. Most teenagers' attitudes have improved and become positive (Suhailah et al., 2019). Many girls and women believe that mothers are the best source of information and support during puberty. Communication is facilitated by the mother's availability, warmth, and close parent-child relationship. Challenges include communication taboos, embarrassment, ambiguous message content, and parents' lack of knowledge and uncertainty (Crichton et al., 2012). Teens don't get the information they need from their parents to protect their sexual health, even though almost all parents in our study felt they should talk to their teens about sexual topics (Sandra Byers et al., 2021). Adolescents are highly interested in understanding the feelings and perceptions of the opposite sex. Gaining this knowledge can be beneficial in building emotionally and physically satisfying relationships (Bauer et al., 2020).

4.3. The Role of Mother's Interpersonal Communication with adolescent girls

Interpersonal communication can be created and built in the smallest sphere of human life, namely the family. Family communication involves communication between parents and children (Thariq, 2018). Hartley (2014) states that interpersonal communication involves two people exchanging information and feelings through verbal and nonverbal messages. This definition underscores the important fact that interpersonal communication is not only concerned with what is said, i.e., the language used, but how the language is spoken, i.e., non-verbal language is transmitted, such as tone of voice and facial expressions. Interpersonal communication is communication that has the following characteristics: (1) communication between one person and another person, (2) communication that occurs face to face, (3) communication that reflects the form and content of communication that is interpersonal interaction and (4) communication prioritizes individual characteristics, individual roles and social relationships between them.

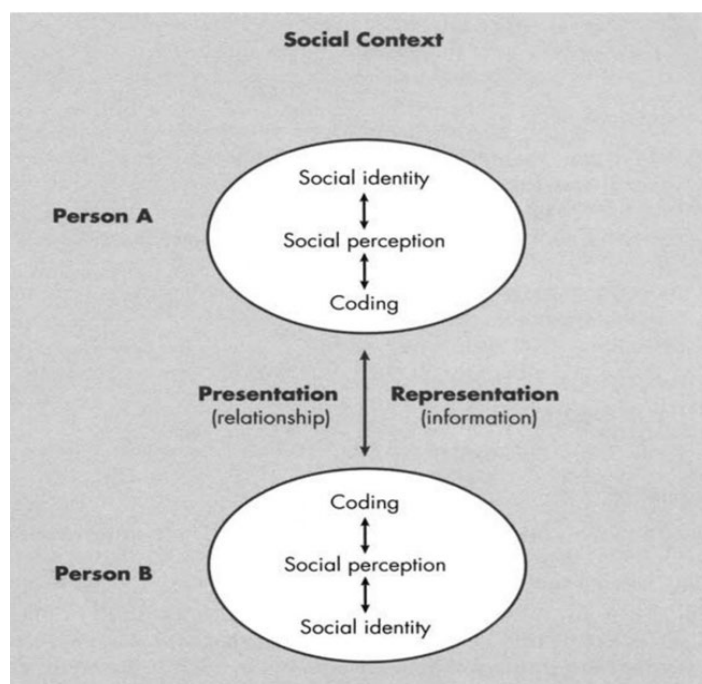


Figure 1. Hartley's Interpersonal Communication

Taylor (2007) explains that interpersonal communication occurs when someone communicates directly with other people in that situation, one by one or in small groups. Interpersonal communication can be used for various purposes. Devito (2012) states that all people involved in interpersonal communication have various goals, such as getting to know themselves and others, getting to know the outside world, creating and maintaining relationships, influencing attitudes and behavior, playing and seeking entertainment, and helping interpersonal communication become a way to talk about ourselves so that through interpersonal communication we learn about how and to what extent we should be open to other people, it can also make us aware of the values, attitudes, and behavior of other people so that we can respond to them. According to other people's actions (Devito, 2012).

Interpersonal communication is one of the most popular teaching subjects and research areas in communication studies. Interpersonal communication examines how people in relationships talk to each other, why they choose the messages they choose, and the effects of messages on the relationship and the individual. The family has an important function in creating inner peace for teenagers. If they feel warmth, affection, and calm from their parents towards them, then their spirits will be eased. On the other hand, teenagers can also suffer and be pushed to be defiant and misbehave if their parents do not love them and do not understand what they are going through. In dealing with delinquent teenagers, wise parents can understand their children's situation and help them overcome their problems. A family with warmth and affection and the ability to express concern and appreciation openly will enable teenagers to develop essential trust in their environment and provide ample growth opportunities (Saputra, 2017).

One of the main controversial ideas studied in many cultures and countries is about who has more authority to educate children and adolescents about sexuality and healthy sexual activities. Many studies show that parents are generally not ready to provide complete education about sexuality (Lorga et al., 2021). Parents are an important source of sexual health information for adolescents (Sandra Byers et al., 2021). The influence of parent-adolescent discussions on adolescents' sexuality and sexual risk depends on what parents say and how they say it (Whitaker et al., 1999). A parent-based approach to sexual risk reduction has many advantages. First, a parent-based approach allows parents to present and discuss topics in a way that is consistent with their values (Jaccard et al., 2002). In the process of sex education from parents to teenagers, good communication is needed so that teenagers can understand what is being taught entirely and comprehensively by their mothers. Comprehensive sexuality education has proven essential in providing teens with information about the cognitive, emotional, physical, and social aspects of sex, equipping them with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values to make sexual decisions that align with their health and relationship goals (Pichon et al., 2022). Adolescents' perceptions lead to more open and frequent communication with mothers than fathers and good relationships with mothers. Adolescents perceive fathers as strict, intimidating, unapproachable, and inaccessible. Although teenagers generally tend to discuss sexual matters with their mothers (Muhwezi et al., 2015).

Sex education is certainly not just teaching children and teenagers about the anatomy and physiology of biological and reproductive sex. Parents and caregivers can be essential as their children's primary sexuality educators. However, educating young women seems to be a social taboo and causes individual and collective fear that influences many adults to talk openly and honestly about sexuality, especially with teenagers. The role of parental communication regarding sex education for children is still taboo to discuss (Herzig van Wees et al., 2021; Lumentah et al., 2020). Embarrassment is another factor that prevents mothers from discussing sexual matters with their children (Nambambi & Mufune, 2011). Parent-child sexual communication has been shown to protect against sexual risk among adolescents (Moore et al., 2015; Santa Maria et al., 2015; Widman et al., 2016). Opinion of Widman et al. (2016), sexual communication with parents, especially mothers, plays a small protective role in adolescents' safer sex behavior, and this protective effect is more pronounced in girls than in boys. According to Mwalyagile (2020), open communication with parents can encourage positive adolescent development because teenagers can understand the risks of having sex. Open communication about sex between parents and teenagers is crucial (Leekuan et al., 2021).

Parent-adolescent communication is the verbal transmission of information by mothers and fathers about sexual distress (Teitelman et al., 2008). The importance of parent-child conversations about sex and the general family communication climate has been emphasized in many studies (Horan et al., 2018). Although few parents and teens talk to each other about dating violence, communication with parents can help teens make better decisions about dating violence (Shaffer et al., 2018). Continuous and open communication between parents and their children is essential for discussing sex-related issues (Shin et al., 2019). Communication is carried out mainly in one direction: parents convey warnings, and the younger generation is expected to listen and heed advice (Jaccard et al., 2002). Most parents are careful in choosing their words when giving warnings about sex to their children. In a process study assessing parent-child sexual communication, mothers were consistently more proactive in initiating sexual conversations, discussed more topics, and were more comfortable discussing sex than fathers. Mothers reported being more comfortable communicating about sexuality with their daughters than with their sons. In literature, girls are more likely to communicate about sexual health with their mothers than their fathers, and boys are more likely to communicate about sexual health with their fathers (Flores & Barroso, 2017).

For parental communication to have a meaningful impact on adolescents, adolescents must first be exposed to that communication, they must attend to the communication, and they must understand the communication (e.g., the

meaning structure of the source must be mapped onto what the adolescent's extracted meaning structure), they must accept the extracted meanings as valid. They must store these meanings in memory. Later, these meanings may need to be accessed from memory at a certain point, giving rise to a fundamental retrieval process. These processes of exposure, attention, understanding, reception, retention, and accurate retrieval form the foundation for meaningful communication. The processes are interrelated; each must usually occur for nontrivial communication. Many teenagers and young people may lack knowledge about what sexuality means if the information they receive is not accurate or adequate (Freeman et al., 2018) because teenagers often look for information about sexual health online. However, it is mostly used to meet and communicate with friends (Olumide & Ojengbede, 2016).

According to Pichon et al. (2022), parents use three approaches to discussing sex and transactional sex with their daughters: (1) scaring their daughters into avoiding sex, (2) being "strict,"; and (3) relying on mothers rather than fathers to "counsel" daughters. One of the main controversial ideas studied in many cultures and countries is about who has more authority to educate children and adolescents about sexuality and healthy sexual activities. Many studies show that parents are generally not ready to provide complete education about sexuality (Lorga et al., 2021). Parent-child communication, especially between mothers and daughters, has been proven influential in reducing risky sexual behavior among adolescent girls (Teitelman et al., 2008), as a statement of Wiendijarti (2020). The mother's role is still more dominant in helping children, so assistance to teenage girls tends to be more intensive/ frequent than to teenage boys. Mothers are more comfortable engaging with daughters than sons in sexual communication (Flores & Barroso, 2017). Four significant parenting components are related to sexual development during adolescence: attitudes/values, communication, control/monitoring strategies, and parent-child relationships. The last three factors all mediate between parental attitudes and adolescent sexual activity (Sorbring et al., 2015).

5. Conclusions

Sex education is something knowledge skills that should be immediately given to teenagers about sexual intercourse to avoid anything that could cause negative effects. Teenagers need information about sex education issues from those closest to them, including mothers. The role of mothers is crucial in providing sex education to young women so that they are not affected by free sex, even though this is considered taboo.

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