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Reproductive health knowledge and attitudes toward adolescent mental health

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Abstract

Background: Reproductive health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being related to the reproductive system, its functions, and processes, not merely the absence of disease or disability. Lack of knowledge about reproductive health among adolescents can lead to various problems such as unintended pregnancy, abortion, early marriage, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and HIV/AIDS. Therefore, adequate knowledge and positive attitudes toward reproductive health are essential to prevent these risks, especially among high school students.

Purpose: To describe the level of knowledge and attitudes toward reproductive health among adolescents.

Method: A quantitative design with an analytic survey approach. The sampling technique used was non-probability sampling with a purposive sampling method. The population consisted of 282 students, with a sample of 247 respondents. Data were collected using a questionnaire and analyzed using Microsoft Excel and the Statistical Programmer for Social Science (SPSS).

Results: The majority of respondents had good knowledge, with 214 students (86.6%) categorized as having a high level of knowledge. In terms of attitude, most respondents also demonstrated positive attitudes toward reproductive health, with 162 students (65.6%).

Conclusion: Most adolescents have good knowledge and positive attitudes regarding reproductive health. However, continuous education is still needed to maintain and further improve awareness and positive attitudes toward reproductive health.

Keywords: Attitude; Adolescents; High School Students; Knowledge; Reproductive Health.

INTRODUCTION

Reproductive health encompasses all aspects related to the reproductive system, its functions, and processes, which should be in a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or disability. Reproduction refers to the human life process of producing offspring for the continuity of life, while reproductive organs are body parts that function in human reproduction (Harnani, Marlina, & Kursani, 2025). Reproductive health discussions are not limited to diseases affecting the reproductive system but also include preventive efforts and self-care to avoid reproductive health problems (Inayat Ali, Azam, Tikmani, & Saleem, 2025). However,

inequalities still exist between males and females in accessing information and reproductive health services, highlighting the importance of addressing reproductive rights comprehensively with a gender equality perspective (Rahmawati & Agustin, 2020).

Sexual behavior remains a significant issue in adolescent reproductive health. A global survey reported that 46% of sexual behaviors are considered morally unacceptable. Risky sexual behaviors among adolescents, particularly unmarried individuals, continue to increase. Several studies indicate that the age at first sexual intercourse ranges from 14 to 23 years, with the highest proportion occurring between 17 and 18

years (Dewi, 2023).

According to the World Health Organization approximately 21 million pregnancies occur annually among adolescents aged 15–19 years, with around 50% classified as unintended pregnancies. These unintended pregnancies contribute to early marriage, where globally 1 in 5 girls marry before the age of 18, with higher prevalence in developing countries (Wright, Gabb, & Ryan, 2021). In Indonesia, data from the National Socioeconomic Survey (NSS) in 2023 show that about 19% of males marry between the ages of 16–18 years, and 2% marry before the age of 16. Additionally, 44% of females give birth before the age of 21. One of the contributing factors to early marriage is unintended pregnancy. Data from the Indonesian Adolescent Reproductive Health Survey (ARHS) indicate that approximately 12% of adolescent girls have experienced unintended pregnancy, while 7% of adolescent boys reported that their partners experienced unintended pregnancy (Kyilleh, Tabong, & Konlaan, 2018). This study was conducted because many adolescents today still perceive reproductive health education as unimportant and rarely discuss it, despite the increasing involvement of adolescents in risky sexual behaviors and their limited understanding of reproductive health. Preliminary observations at the study site indicated that some students lacked awareness of reproductive health, which may lead to unintended pregnancies and potentially result in unsafe abortion practices (Zakaria, Karim, Mazumder, Cheng, & Xu, 2020).

RESEARCH METHOD

A quantitative research design using a cross-sectional approach. According to Notoatmodjo, a cross-sectional study is conducted to examine the correlation between risk factors by collecting data at a single point in time. The study was conducted at Eben Haezar Christian High School in Manado in November 2025. The population of this study consisted of 11th-grade students, totaling 282 students, including 145 males and 137 females. The sampling technique used was non-probability sampling with a purposive sampling method, in which participants were selected based on predetermined criteria. The final sample size included all 282 students who met the inclusion criteria.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to eligible students. Prior to data collection, the researcher explained the purpose and objectives of the study and obtained informed consent from the respondents. Instructions on how to complete the questionnaire were also provided to ensure accurate responses. After completion, the researcher reviewed the questionnaires to ensure completeness. The inclusion criteria were: (1) 11th-grade students who were officially registered and active, and (2) students who agreed to participate and signed the informed consent form. The exclusion criteria included students who were absent during data collection. The variables examined in this study were knowledge and attitudes toward reproductive health.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Table 1. Distribution of Respondent (N= 247)

Variable	Results
Age (n/%) (Mean±SD) (Range) (Year)	(15.9±0.3) (15-16)
15	18/7.3
16	229/92.7
Gender (n/%)	
Female	144/58.3
Male	103/41.7

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Knowledge Level (n/%)	
Good	214/86.6
Moderate	16/65.5
Poor	17/69.9
Attitudes (n/%)	
Good	162/65.6
Poor	85/34.4

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics and reproductive health-related variables among adolescents. The majority of participants were aged 16 years (92.7%) with a mean age of 15.9 ± 0.3 years and an age range of 15–16 years. Based on gender distribution, female participants accounted for 58.3%, while males comprised 41.7% of the sample. Regarding the level of reproductive health knowledge, most respondents had a good level of knowledge (86.6%), whereas a smaller proportion demonstrated moderate and poor knowledge levels. In terms of attitudes toward reproductive health, the majority of adolescents showed good attitudes (65.6%), while 34.4% had poor attitudes.

DISCUSSION

Age is an important factor influencing adolescents' knowledge and attitudes toward reproductive health. Older students tend to have better knowledge compared to younger ones. This can be attributed to more mature cognitive abilities, increased learning experiences, and broader exposure to information as age increases. In contrast, younger students are still in the early stages of understanding physical changes and reproductive functions, and their limited experience may affect their ability to comprehend reproductive health information comprehensively (Hurlock, 2017). Age also influences attitudes, where older adolescents generally demonstrate more mature and responsible attitudes due to better emotional and social development, as well as improved ability to assess risks and consequences (Tegegn, Yazachew, & Gelaw, 2018).

Gender differences also play a role in reproductive health knowledge. Female students generally have better knowledge, particularly regarding biological aspects such as menstruation,

pregnancy, and hormonal changes. This may be influenced by direct experiences (e.g., menstruation), greater parental attention to female puberty, and educational programs that emphasize female reproductive health. Meanwhile, male adolescents often have more limited knowledge, especially regarding female reproductive functions and pregnancy risks. This indicates the need for equitable and comprehensive reproductive health education for both genders (Gaferi, Al-Harbi, Yakout, & Soliman, 2018).

Knowledge is defined as the result of an individual's sensory experience of an object through the five senses, with most knowledge acquired through sight and hearing (Rahmi, Romlah, Darmayanti, & Arimurti, 2020). Health promotion plays a key role in improving individuals' ability to adopt healthy behaviors (Mbadu Muanda, Gahungu, Wood, & Bertrand, 2018). Reproductive health in adolescents includes understanding the structure and function of reproductive organs, puberty, and the physical and psychological changes that occur during this period (Kashefi, Bakhtiari, Pasha, Amiri, & Bakouei, 2021). Adequate knowledge enables students to understand their bodies and respond positively to these changes (Bakhtiari, Pasha, Kashefi, Nasiri-Amiri, & Bakouei, 2023).

The findings of this study showed that most students had good knowledge of reproductive health, with 214 respondents (86.6%) categorized as having good knowledge, 16 (6.5%) moderate knowledge, and 17 (6.9%) poor knowledge. This indicates that the majority of students have understood basic concepts such as reproductive health, physical changes during puberty, and the importance of maintaining reproductive hygiene.

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However, some students still showed limited understanding, particularly regarding ovulation. Knowledge levels are influenced by various factors, including access to information, family environment, school education, and media exposure. These findings are consistent with previous studies, which also reported that most students had adequate to good knowledge of reproductive health (Adjie, Kurniawan, & Surya, 2022; AlQuaiz, Kazi, & Al Muneef, 2023).

Attitude is defined as an individual's response to a stimulus, which can influence behavior (Roza & Yolanda, 2024). Students' attitudes toward reproductive health play a crucial role in shaping their health behaviors. Positive attitudes encourage adolescents to maintain personal hygiene, respect their bodies, and avoid risky behaviors such as unsafe sexual practices. In this study, most students demonstrated positive attitudes toward reproductive health, with 162 respondents (65.6%) categorized as having good attitudes and 85 respondents (34.4%) having less favorable attitudes (Solehati, Pramukti, Rahmat, & Kosasih, 2022).

The generally positive attitudes observed in this study indicate that students are aware of the importance of maintaining reproductive health and its impact on their future. However, some students still feel hesitant or embarrassed to discuss reproductive health issues openly, as the topic is often considered sensitive or taboo. This may hinder their ability to access accurate information and may lead them to rely on unreliable sources. Therefore, efforts are needed to foster positive attitudes through comprehensive reproductive health education, as well as active involvement from teachers and parents in providing accurate and age-appropriate information (Putri & bin Sansuwito, 2025).

Overall, the findings of this study are consistent with previous research, which also reported predominantly positive attitudes among adolescents toward reproductive health. Positive attitudes are an essential foundation for developing healthy behaviors, enabling adolescents to make responsible decisions and maintain their reproductive health (Hall, Morhe, Manu, Harris, Ela, Loll, & Dalton, 2018).

CONCLUSION

The majority of students have a good level of knowledge and positive attitudes toward reproductive health. These findings indicate that most adolescents already possess adequate understanding and favorable perspectives in maintaining their reproductive health, which can support the development of healthy behaviors.

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