

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH SEXUAL INTENTION AMONG STUDENTS EAST KALIMANTAN IN PREVENTING PREMARITAL SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

Desy Ayu Wardani^{1,2}, Siti Khuzaimah Ahmad Sharoni^{1*}, Endang Triyanto³

1. Centre for Nursing Studies, Faculty of Health Sciences, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Selangor, Puncak Alam Campus, 42300 Selangor, Malaysia
2. Nursing Study Program, Institute of Health Technology and Science Wiyata Husada Samarinda 75243, East Kalimantan, Indonesia
3. Nursing Department, Faculty of Health Science, Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, Purwokerto 53122, Central Java, Indonesia

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*Corresponding Author

Siti Khuzaimah Ahmad Sharoni
sitik123@uitm.edu.my

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ABSTRACT

Sexual intention is one of the key factors contributing to students' engagement in premarital sexual behavior, which may lead to various negative consequences, including physical health risks, psychological problems, social stigma, and educational disruption. This study aimed to examine the associations between gender, romantic relationships, self-efficacy, self-control, self-esteem, and sexual intention among students. A cross-sectional design was employed, and data were collected using validated instruments: General Self-Efficacy Scale, the Self-Control Scale, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and the Youth Sexual Intention Questionnaire. Data were analyzed using univariate and bivariate methods with the chi-square test. A total of 328 students participated, consisting of 192 females (58.5%) and 136 males (41.5%). Among them, 69 (21%) were in romantic relationships. More than half of the students reported high self-efficacy (51.2%), self-control (52.7%), and self-esteem (54%). Additionally, 176 students (53.7%) demonstrated high sexual intention. The analysis showed significant relationships between sexual intention and gender, romantic relationships, and self-control ($p < .05$), whereas self-efficacy and self-esteem were not significantly associated ($p > .05$). These findings indicate that gender, romantic relationships, and self-control are key factors influencing sexual intention and are essential considerations in the prevention of premarital sexual behavior among students.

Keywords: Adolescent; intention; sexual behavior



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BACKGROUND

Adolescence is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood. During this period, individuals undergo rapid physical, psychological, and intellectual growth and development. One of them is psychosexual development, where adolescents begin to be attracted to the opposite sex and form relationships (Saliara et al., 2017; Aniceto & Saraiva, 2018). In these relationships, they may engage in some premarital sexual behavior, such as holding hands, hugging, kissing on the lips, touching, and sexual intercourse. Premarital sexual behavior has attracted the attention of

many health professionals and scientists over the years, mainly because of its health-related impacts, such as sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies.

Premarital sexual behavior among adolescents is common worldwide, with more than two-thirds engaging in such behavior, even in countries like Indonesia, where it is traditionally taboo (Mundhiro et al., 2021). In China, there has also been a significant increase in the prevalence of premarital sex among adolescents (Zhang et al., 2022). Data reports that 25-51% of Indonesian adolescents have had

premarital sex (Sejati, 2022). However, research conducted in Indonesia shows varying prevalence rates of premarital sexual behavior among adolescents. Data on premarital sexual behavior in several provinces and cities in Indonesia, and research in West Java, show that only 0.7% of students reported this behavior (Noer et al., 2024). Among late adolescents in Semarang, premarital sexual behavior has become a concerning trend (Febrianti et al., 2021). Additionally, from 2021 to 2023, there was an increase in premarital sexual activity among adolescents worldwide. Indonesia is also experiencing an increase in premarital sexual behavior. The causes of premarital sexual behavior among adolescents are multifaceted, and one of them is sexual intention.

Culturally tailored sexual education programs that integrate local values and religious norms have been shown to reduce risky premarital sexual behaviors among adolescents (WHO, 2023; UNESCO, 2022). Several studies have shown that factors linked to sexual intention include self-awareness, a high level of education, parents with a high level of education, and the ability to consult with parents (Genovese, 2021; Widman et al., 2016; Santa et al., 2015). In addition, grade repetition, alcohol use, smoking, and drug use influence sexual intentions (Furlanetto et al., 2019). A study among adolescent students in public secondary schools in Tanzania found that self-efficacy was a significant factor influencing sexual behaviors among healthy adolescents (Rushahu, 2023). This finding underscores the importance of self-efficacy in shaping adolescents' decisions regarding sexual activities. It offers empirical evidence supporting the claim that self-efficacy is a fundamental psychological construct that impacts decision-making processes, including those related to adolescent sexual behavior.

Previous studies have also shown that adolescents with strong self-control are better able to resist peer pressure and delay gratification, leading to more informed sexual choice (Rushahu, 2023). The impact of self-control on risky sexual behavior among teenagers highlights the importance of self-control in steering adolescents toward healthier decision-making processes (Thien, 2023). Thus, recognizing the significance of self-control in shaping sexual intentions can guide the development of targeted interventions to enhance this psychological trait in adolescents.

Many factors can influence sexual intention in students. Low sexual intention can prevent students from engaging in premarital sexual behavior. Nurses have an important role in identifying students' sexual intentions at school. This study's results can provide evidence for determining interventions to reduce sexual intention and prevent premarital sexual behavior (Dittus et al, 2015). This research aims to determine the factors associated with sexual intentions.

METHOD

Study design and settings

A quantitative cross-sectional survey was used to analyze self-efficacy, self-control, and self-esteem regarding sexual intention. This research was conducted at three public high schools in two cities in Kalimantan, Indonesia.

Samples

The sample size was calculated using G*power 3.1, with an effect size of 0.25, a power value of 95%, and an alpha level of 5%, yielding a sample size of 265 candidates. After considering an additional 20% for anticipated dropouts, the total number of respondents was 328. This research involved 328 respondents, distributed across 112, 114, and 102 respondents per school. The researchers randomly selected

public high schools in two cities and found three schools. Then, stratified random sampling was used in grade XI in each school. The inclusion criteria are students in class XI (age 15-17 years) in high school, have an active status as a high school student, and are able to understand the Indonesian Language. Those not included in the study who met the exclusion criteria were sick students (students who had been diagnosed with mental disorders as indicated by a medical doctor's letter).

Research instruments

This study collected demographic data (gender, relationship, age) and distributed four questionnaires to assess students' self-efficacy, self-control, self-esteem, and sexual intention. Self-efficacy was measured using the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) from Novrianto et al. (2019), consisting of 10 items scored 1-4, with total scores ranging from 10 to 40. The questionnaire was translated into Bahasa Indonesia and tested for validity and reliability with 74 students (Cronbach's alpha of 0.958). Self-control was measured using the Self-Control Scale (SCS) from Wardani & Alfiani (2023), with items scored 1-4 and total scores ranging from 10 to 40. It was also translated and validated with 74 students (Cronbach's alpha of 0.845). Self-esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) from Rosenberg (1982) as cited in Li & Zhou (2021), with 10 items scored 1-4, total scores 10-40. The translated version was tested on 74 students (Cronbach's alpha of 0.744). Sexual intention was measured using the Youth Sexual Intention Questionnaire (YSI-Q) from Muhammad et al. (2017). The translated version was tested on 74 students (Cronbach's alpha of 0.931). Sexual intention is measured based on an individual's level of desire and willingness to engage in sexual activity, as reflected in their cognitive and emotional responses to sexual behavior. Sexual intention is assessed using a structured questionnaire consisting of several items rated on a Likert scale, with 20 items scored 1-4 and total scores ranging from 20 to 80. Higher scores (≥ 32) indicate a stronger intention to engage in sexual activity, while lower scores (<32) indicate a weaker or even no intention at all.

Data collection

The data were collected directly by conducting school visits. All respondents received a consent form that included a brief explanation of the research's aims and procedures. After the respondent read the form and agreed to become a research respondent, they completed the informed consent sheet and consent form using a code and did not include their names (student and student's guardian). The respondents filled out the questionnaire in 15-20 minutes. All respondents have been given the right to withdraw from the research at any stage of the process. The respondent's data have been kept confidential and were only used for research purposes.

Data analysis

The researchers performed univariate and bivariate data analyses. The univariate analysis aimed to assess respondents' characteristics, including the frequency distributions of age, relationship status, and gender. This study also used the chi-square test. Before the bivariate analysis, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used because the normality test detected abnormal data values. The researchers used the median value to determine the cut point for each variable.

Ethical consideration

This research prioritized anonymity. The study protocol was explained to the respondents and guardians before they

agreed to participate and signed the informed consent form. After that, informed consent was obtained from the guardian, and informed assent was also obtained. The study protocol has passed a research ethics review from the Faculty Ethics Review Committee (FERC) of Universiti Teknologi MARA Malaysia, with the letter number 500-FSK (PT.23/4), and from the Health Research Ethics Committee of the Health Polytechnic of the Ministry of Health East Kalimantan with the letter number DP.04.001/7.1/07761/2023.

RESULT

Table 1. Respondents' characteristics (n = 328)

Variable	Total (%)	Median $\pm$ SD
Age	328 (100)	17 $\pm$ 0.508
Gender		
Female	192 (58.5)	
Male	136 (41.5)	

Variable	Total (%)	Median $\pm$ SD
Relationship		
Yes	69 (21)	
No	259 (79)	
Self-efficacy		39 $\pm$ 5.578
High	168 (51.2)	
Low	160 (48.8)	
Self-control		35 $\pm$ 3.831
High	173 (52.7)	
Low	155 (47.3)	
Self-esteem		28 $\pm$ 4.182
High	177 (54)	
Low	151 (46)	
Sexual intention		32 $\pm$ 7.029
High	176 (53.7)	
Low	152 (46.3)	

Table 2. Respondents' sexual intention with gender, relationship, self-efficacy, self-control, and self-esteem

Variable	Sexual Intention		p-value	X ² (df)
	High n (%)	Low n (%)		
Gender			0.005	7.924(1)
Female	90(27.4)	102(31.1)		
Male	86(26.2)	50(15.2)		
Relationship			0.000	25.195(1)
Yes	56(17.1)	13(4)		
No	120(36.6)	139(42.4)		
Self-efficacy			0.764	0.090(1)
High	92(28)	76(23.2)		
Low	84(25.6)	76(23.2)		
Self-control			0.000	26.773(1)
High	69(21)	104(31.7)		
Low	107(32.6)	48(14.6)		
Self-esteem			0.440	0.596(1)
High	91(27.7)	86(26.2)		
Low	85(25.9)	66(20.1)		

The results show that the respondents were, on average, 17 years old, and that there were more females than males (192 students, or 58.5%). The normality test results for age, relationships, self-efficacy, self-control, self-esteem, and sexual intention revealed that the data were not all normally distributed. The variables in this study were categorized by median values (Table 1). The results also show that gender, relationships, and self-control influence sexual intentions. Meanwhile, self-efficacy and self-esteem are not related to sexual intentions and the prevention of premarital sexual behavior (Table 2).

DISCUSSION

The demographic data highlights several key factors influencing sexual intention among students. The majority of participants were female (58.5%), suggesting differences in gender-based perceptions of sexual behavior. A significant proportion (79%) of students also reported not being in a relationship, suggesting that relationship status plays a role in sexual decision-making.

Meanwhile, the self-efficacy levels were nearly evenly distributed among the participants, with 51.2% reporting high self-efficacy. This factor is crucial, as individuals with higher self-efficacy are more likely to make autonomous decisions regarding their sexual behavior. Similarly, self-control was reported as high in 52.7% of the participants, indicating that a slight majority of students demonstrated greater impulse control, which can serve as a protective factor against risky sexual behavior. Although 51.2% of students reported high

levels of self-efficacy, this factor did not show a significant relationship with sexual intention, but with overall self-efficacy in specific domains (Bandura, 1997 as cited in Skaalvik, 2020). Previous studies have shown that sexual intention is more strongly influenced by contextual and interpersonal factors, such as peer norms, parental supervision, religious beliefs, and cultural expectations, which may outweigh the effects of individual self-efficacy (Widman et al., 2016). Self-efficacy may act indirectly, influencing sexual behavior through mediators such as self-control, attitudes, or communication with parents, rather than having a direct impact on sexual intentions (Krause et al., 2022). Therefore, in this research, the implementation of comprehensive sexual education in an integrated manner is the way forward to increase self-efficacy.

Furthermore, 54% of students reported high self-esteem. Previous research suggests that higher self-esteem is associated with greater confidence in making informed decisions about sexual health. This study also found that sexual intention was relatively balanced among the participants, with 53.7% of students reporting high intention to abstain from premarital sex. This result suggests that multiple factors, including social and psychological determinants, influence students' decision-making processes. Although 54% of students in this study reported having high self-esteem, this variable did not show a significant relationship with sexual intention. This finding aligns with research conducted by Ahn and Yang (2022), which shows that the relationship between self-esteem and risky sexual behavior is inconsistent, often becoming

insignificant when contextual variables such as peer norms, parental influence, and cultural values become more significant factors. Therefore, self-esteem alone may not be a strong determinant of sexual intention.

Sexual intention is one of the causes for students to engage in premarital sexual behavior. In this study, the students' sexual intention was in the high category. This result is influenced by several factors, including gender, relationship, and self-control. Meanwhile, self-efficacy and self-esteem have no relation to sexual intention in our study. A factor that may have an impact on high sexual intention is gender. Gender can be a high predictor of a student's intention to engage in premarital sexual behavior. The results of this study align with those of Mundhiro (2021). The study explained that male students had a sexual intention of 21.1% in Indonesia. Yudanagara et al (2024) also mentioned that 14.7% of male adolescents in Indonesia intended to have premarital intercourse. However, there is a lack of research in Indonesia that focuses on the sexual intentions of female students or their comparison with male students.

This study's results show that female students are more likely to fall into the high sexual intention category than the male gender. Most studies have examined the relationship between gender and premarital sexual behavior rather than the relationship between gender and sexual intention because behavior is more concrete, easier to measure, and is already included in large-scale adolescent health surveys. In contrast, intention is an internal psychological construct that requires valid measurement tools and long-term monitoring. (Tyas et al., 2024; Fauziah et al., 2025). In many cultural contexts, stigma and social desirability also make adolescents, especially females, less willing to disclose their intentions regarding premarital sex, resulting in inaccurate reporting and measurement bias (Santoso & Sulistiyowati, 2024). Additionally, public health priorities emphasize observable outcomes such as risky sexual practices, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), or unplanned pregnancies, which do not focus research on behavior and gender differences in behavior, rather than sexual intentions (Tyas et al., 2024; Fauziah et al., 2025).

Furthermore, this research investigates the role of relationships. More students who are in an intimate relationship have high sexual intentions compared to low sexual intentions. Meanwhile, more students who are not in a relationship also have high sexual intentions than low sexual intentions. This finding shows that during adolescence, sexual intentions normally increase even though they are not dating due to sexual development and hormones in adolescents. A study found that there is also a positive relationship between dating behavior and sexual intentions among Latino adolescents (Mundhiro et al, 2021). Young men were more likely to engage in sexual activity right away, regardless of whether they were dating or had girlfriends. Dating before marriage can help foster mutual respect, open communication, and trust. However, these days, dating is viewed as a way to express interest in the other sex, which is demonstrated through a variety of dangerous sexual behaviors such as kissing, hugging, caressing, and engaging in sexual activity (Lindberg, Maddow-Zimet, & Marcell, 2019). Nevertheless, sexual intention is not only directly influenced by relationships but also shaped by the level of self-control that adolescents possess.

Self-control has a positive significance with sexual intentions. The sexual self-control model was employed to identify psychological reasons that motivate individuals to refrain

from premarital sexual behavior. This research shows that some respondents with low self-control had high sexual intentions. However, there were also respondents whose self-control was high but whose sexual intention was also high. This shows that during adolescence, sexual intentions are usually high because of the development of reproductive hormones. The role of sexual self-control in suppressing sexual intentions to avoid intimate relations indicates that intimate relations are still performed and considered as infringing behavior. When intimate relations before marriage are considered prohibited, individuals will try to exercise self-control to avoid engaging in premarital sexual behavior (Sari et al, 2020).

In addition, family environment factors can be considered an important influence on sexual intentions. Several studies show that family dynamics, such as parental supervision, communication about sexual health, parenting styles, and the quality of emotional bonds, play a significant role in shaping adolescents' sexual intentions and behaviors. Moreover, a supportive family environment that provides open discussions about sexuality and emphasizes moral or cultural values often functions as a protective factor by strengthening adolescents' self-control and reducing the likelihood of engaging in premarital sexual activity and sexual intention (Shawaluddin et al., 2025; Yudanagara et al., 2024; Sangsuk & Thipchart, 2023).

IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Research related to sexual intentions is still considered taboo for students. Therefore, before conducting the research, the researcher built a trusting relationship with them by participating in the students' activities. After the respondents began to trust the researcher, we distributed the questionnaire. For clinical implications, this study will provide updated information for nurses working in health centers and communities to prevent sexual behavior in students by lowering their sexual intentions.

CONCLUSION

There is a relationship between gender, relationship, and self-control with sexual intention in students and the prevention of premarital sexual behavior. Future research may focus on providing effective interventions to reduce sexual intention and prevent students from engaging in premarital sexual behavior.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

DAW, SKAS, and ET contributed to writing this article. DAW contributed to data analyses and the manuscript was revised by SKAS and ET. All authors have no conflict of interest.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None declared.

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