

Original Article

Prevalence and Factors Associated with Pre-marital Sexual Intercourse Among Adolescents of School Age in Bima City

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ABSTRACT

Pre-marital sexual behavior among adolescents is still a concern in most of the countries, including Indonesia. The condition would be worse due to the discontinuation of the study, pre-marital pregnancy, and risk of sexually transmitted diseases. This study aimed to examine the prevalence of pre-marital sexual intercourse and factors associated among adolescents of school age in Kendal, Indonesia. This cross-sectional study employed 176 in grade XI from 9 classes in Senior High School 4 Bima, aged 15 to 18 years old in Bima City, Indonesia. The sample was selected by proportionate stratified random sampling. The dependent variable is pre-marital sex and the independent variables are knowledge, self-control, relationship status, role of teacher, and role of health worker. The data analysis was done using univariate (frequency and percentage) and bivariate analysis (Chi-square and simple logistic regression) using SPSS software. The result found prevalence of adolescents who were at risk of having sexual intercourse was 26.1%. The factors significantly associated with pre-marital sex are not having self-control (COR 8.5) and being in a relationship (COR 5.0). However, other variables including knowledge, the role of the teacher, and the role of health workers did not find significant association with pre-marital sex. Future studies can add more potential predictors to the study including the level of household, school, and community. The government needs to add the issue of pre-marital sex as well as the tendency to discontinue the study if pre-marital pregnancy occurs. Self-control can be strengthened by involving religious activity in school. Some recommendations for school-based sexual education programs, youth counseling services, or community interventions for the target population could work more to prevent pre-marital sexual intercourse among adolescents of school age.

Keywords: Pre-Marital Sex, Adolescent, Bima City

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INTRODUCTION

Pre-marital sexual intercourse among adolescents is a significant concern globally, especially in developing countries. In Ethiopia, studies have shown that 31.3 percent of adolescent students engage in pre-marital sexual intercourse¹. Factors influencing this behavior include residing in urban areas, where adolescents were found to be more likely to engage in pre-marital sexual practices². Additionally, being female has been linked to

an increased likelihood of early sexual initiation in Ethiopia³. In Nigeria, gender norms play a role in shaping adolescent sexuality, with adolescent girls often choosing sexual abstinence due to fears of social and health consequences, while boys may exhibit more tolerance towards pre-marital sexual relationships⁴. Furthermore, in Uganda, participating in sexual activity, regardless of marital status, can lead to negative reproductive health outcomes among adolescents⁵.

In Indonesia's context, a study analyzing data from the 2015 Global School-based Health Survey revealed that a higher percentage of adolescent boys (6.9%) in Indonesia reported engaging in sexual intercourse compared to girls (3.8%)⁶. Furthermore, a study conducted in Bali, Indonesia, found a significant influence of peer relationships on the premarital sexual behaviors of teenagers in the country⁷. Additionally, research on early adolescents in Semarang, Central Java, aimed to understand sexual intercourse patterns among different age groups⁸.

Pre-marital sexual intercourse among adolescents can have significant consequences on their health and well-being. Research has shown that adolescents who engage in pre-marital sexual intercourse are at an increased risk of having multiple sexual partners, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and unintended pregnancies². Additionally, early sexual debut has been associated with poor mental health outcomes, including symptoms of depression and suicidal behaviors among adolescents⁹.

Moreover, pre-marital sexual behavior in adolescents can lead to a range of negative health outcomes, such as unwanted pregnancies, teenage pregnancies, abortions, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV/AIDS, feelings of guilt, loss of self-respect, depression, substance abuse, and even suicidal ideation^{10,11}. Furthermore, pre-marital sexual intercourse among adolescents the social and psychological including psychological distress, stress, depression, and suicidal ideation^{6,9,12,13}.

The challenges of improving sex education among adolescents include the lack of information from family, school, and peers. Additionally, the taboo and uncommon discussion about sex leads difficulties to promote the risk factor of pre-marital sexual behavior.

Sex and reproductive health education should be given to children who are already adults or teenagers, either through formal or informal education. This is important to prevent biased sex education and knowledge about reproductive health among teenagers¹⁴.

The purpose of this study is to examine the prevalence of pre-marital sexual intercourse risk and risk factors among adolescents in Senior High School Number 4, in Bina City.

METHOD

This study used a cross-sectional time frame. The data collection was conducted during July 2023. The validity and reliability tests were done among 20 students in grade XI at Senior High School Number 4 Bima City.

The population of this study were all students in grade XI in Senior High School Number 4 in Bima City with a total number of 313 students. To select the representative sample, it was used the Slovin formula which resulted in 176 students. Those students were selected using proportionate stratified random sampling from 9 classes in grade XI as representative. The inclusion criteria are students aged 15 to 18 years old and willing to complete the survey.

The pre-marital sex behavior in this study was defined based on 10 questions. Those who answered "yes" to at least one question will be categorized as "risky". The explanatory variables include knowledge (5 questions), which is categorized as good if more than or equal mean score. The self-control consists of 8 questions which are categorized as "yes" if the score is higher or equal mean score. The relationship status consisted of 2 questions which were categorized as "no" if students answered not in relationship. The role of teachers consists of 9 questions which are categorized as "yes" if the score is higher than or equal mean score. The role of health worker is categorized as "yes" if higher or equal mean score. All of the questions were asked using a questionnaire face by face.

The data was analyzed using univariate and bivariate analysis. The statistical software SPSS version 25 was employed during data analysis. The bivariate analysis was done using Chi-square and a simple logistic regression test to examine the correlation between each explanatory variable and pre-marital sex behavior. The 95% confidence interval was used to define the significance level. Moreover, the Odd Ratio (OR) is used to quantify the strength of the association. This study has been approved by the Ethical Committee for Health Research, College of Health Science, Kendal, Central Java Province, Indonesia, with number: 073/EC/KEPK_STIKES_KENDAL/VII/2023. Informed consent was obtained from the participants. Confidentiality and privacy were ensured during data collection including participant protections that enhance the

transparency and credibility of the study.

RESULTS

The result of this study consisted of univariate, bivariate using Chi-square test, and simple logistic regression. Table 1 below describes the information about each variable. Among 176 adolescents involved in this study, 26.1% of them were at risk of pre-marital sex. In terms of knowledge, the majority of them had good sexual and reproductive knowledge (73.3%). According to having self-control, most of them have self-control (64.2%). More than half of them were in a relationship (57.4%). The role of teachers and health workers showed 68.2%, and 42.6%, respectively.

Table 1. The characteristics of the respondents

Variables (n=176)	Frequency	Percentage
Pre-marital sex		
Not risky	130	73.9
Risky	46	26.1
Knowledge		
Good	129	73.3
Poor	47	26.7
Having self-control		
Yes	113	64.2
No	63	35.8
In relationship		
No	75	42.6
Yes	101	57.4
Role of teacher		
Yes	120	68.2
No	56	31.8
Role of health worker		
Yes	75	42.6
No	101	57.4

Table 2 below describes the bivariate analysis using the Chi-square test which showed that the the risky population in this study had good knowledge, did not have self-control, in relationships, involved the role of teacher, and did not involve health workers role.

Table 2. The bivariate analysis results

Variables	Pre-marital sex		Total
	Not risky	Risky	
Knowledge			
Good	99 (76.7)	30 (23.3)	129 (100)
Poor	31 (66.0)	16 (34.0)	47 (100)
Having self-control			
Yes	100 (88.5)	13 (11.5)	113 (100)
No	30 (47.6)	33 (52.4)	63 (100)
In relationship			

No	67 (89.30)	8 (10.7)	75 (100)
Yes	63 (62.40)	38 (37.60)	101 (100)
Role of teacher			
Yes	90 (75.0)	30 (25.0)	120 (100)
No	40 (71.4)	16 (28.6)	56 (100)
Role of health worker			
Yes	54 (72.00)	21 (28.0)	75 (100)
No	76 (75.20)	25 (24.8)	101 (100)

Table 3 below shows the simple logistic regression to see the crude odd ratio of each independent variable related to pre-marital sex. It showed that some variables including having self-control and being in a relationship were significantly associated with pre-marital sex. However, other variables including knowledge, the role of the teacher, and the role of health workers did not find significant association with pre-marital sex. In detail, compared to those who had self-control, adolescents who did not have self-control were 8.5 times more likely to have pre-marital sex. Moreover, compared to those who were not in a relationship, those who were in a relationship were 5.0 times more likely to have pre-marital sex.

Table 3. The Crude Odds Ratio of Correlation

Variables	COR	95%CI (lower-upper)	p-value
Knowledge			
Good (ref)	1		
Poor	1.703	(0.822 – 3.529)	0.212
Having self-control			
Yes (ref)	1		
No	8.462	(3.955 – 18.102)	0.000
In relationship			
No (ref)	1		
Yes	5.052	(2.189 – 11.659)	0.000
Role of teacher			
Yes (ref)	1		
No	1.200	(0.589 – 2.446)	0.750
Role of health worker			
Yes (ref)	1		
No	0.846	(0.430 – 1.665)	0.755

The result of this study revealed that self-control is the strongest factor influencing adolescents to have pre-marital sex. Furthermore, in relationships was found to significantly increasing the odds of having pre-marital sex.

DISCUSSION

Factors associated with pre-marital sex

are influenced by a variety of social, cultural, and individual factors. This current study found the impact of not having self-control and being in a relationship as predictors of having pre-marital sexual intercourse. These findings differ from previous research with some mechanisms driving these associations. In line with findings from this study, the study in Kendal, Indonesia revealed the role of religiosity on sexual behavior¹⁵.

However, previous studies have shown that peer pressure, exposure to pornography, substance use, and gender norms play significant roles in the prevalence of pre-marital sexual activity^{4,16,17}. For instance, research in Ethiopia found that peer pressure, watching pornographic videos, and substance use were significantly associated with pre-marital sexual debut among university students¹⁸. Additionally, gender norms and ideologies about adolescent sexuality were found to influence attitudes towards pre-marital sex, with adolescent boys being less likely to believe in pre-marital abstinence compared to girls⁴. Furthermore, traditional gender roles and religiosity were identified as significant factors contributing to conservative attitudes toward pre-marital sex in Turkey¹⁹.

Furthermore, the influence of cultural and societal factors on pre-marital sex has been investigated. In Nigeria, for example, the stigma and cultural sensitivity surrounding pre-marital sex have led to denial of its prevalence among teenagers²⁰. Additionally, the transactional nature of sexual relationships and power imbalances have been identified as important factors in determining when such relationships are considered exploitative²¹.

The relationship between pre-marital sex and various factors has been the subject of extensive research. Studies have explored the influence of factors such as alcohol consumption, religiosity, gender norms, and parental attachment on pre-marital sexual behavior among adolescents^{4,18,22-26}. Additionally, the impact of marital satisfaction, sexual interaction, and marital disillusionment on pre-marital sex has been investigated²⁷⁻³⁰. Furthermore, the prevalence and consequences of pre-marital sex among university students and the experience of marital infidelity have been examined^{31,32}. The socio-demographic determinants of money script patterns and the consequences of pre-marital sex among female undergraduate students have also been explored

^{33,34}.

Pre-marital sex among adolescents in school age is influenced by various factors. Studies have shown that liberal attitudes towards pre-marital sexual intercourse, incomplete knowledge of sexual and reproductive health, and limited access to appropriate services are determinants of teenage pregnancy³⁵. Additionally, increased pre-marital sex, deterioration of traditional norms and values, and media influence have been associated with risky sexual behaviors among adolescents³⁶. Furthermore, illegal abortions, the risk of HIV infections, and school dropout have been identified as negative consequences of pre-marital sex among high school youths²². In India, it was found that education and pre-marital sex are negatively correlated at the individual level, while factors such as parental disapproval of pre-marital sexual activities and parental connectedness were associated with preventing or delaying pre-marital sexual initiation among young people, especially young women³⁷. Gender norms and ideologies about adolescent sexuality also play a significant role, with adolescent boys being less likely to believe in pre-marital abstinence compared to girls⁴.

Moreover, the consumption of alcohol has been linked to an increased chance of pre-marital sex among secondary school adolescent students^{25,38}. Self-control, parental attachment, and peer roles have been identified as influential factors in pre-marital sexual behavior among adolescents²⁶. Utilization of information centers and youth counseling has been associated with adolescents' attitudes and practices of pre-marital sex³⁹. Additionally, pre-marital sexual behavior has been found to impact the health of adolescents, leading to consequences such as unwanted pregnancy, abortion, sexually transmitted infections, and mental health issues⁴⁰.

The role of self-control in pre-marital sexual behavior among adolescents is a significant area of study. Low self-control has been associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in pre-marital sexual activities⁴¹. Furthermore, the influence of self-control on pre-marital sexual behavior has been highlighted in the context of factors such as peer pressure and watching pornography, which are associated with pre-marital sexual practices among young individuals⁴². The ability to exercise self-control is crucial in resisting peer

pressure and making informed decisions regarding sexual behavior.

Moreover, the influence of self-control on pre-marital sexual behavior has been explored in the context of parental attachment and peer roles²⁶. Self-control has been identified as a factor that can influence pre-marital sexual behavior among adolescents, highlighting the importance of individual psychological factors in shaping sexual decision-making²⁶. Additionally, the relationship between self-control and risky sexual behavior has been examined, with studies indicating that self-control plays a role in mitigating risky sexual behaviors among adolescents⁴³. This underscores the importance of self-control as a protective factor against engaging in pre-marital sexual activities that may lead to adverse health outcomes.

This study cannot be generalized with different populations and times. There are some potential biases in the validity and reliability of the study. Future studies can include the factors of smoking behavior, access to pornography, and religiosity as the potential determinants of pre-marital sexual intercourse. It could be better to discuss methodological approaches in more detail, research gaps, or theoretical frameworks that could further advance understanding of risk factors of pre-marital sexual behavior.

Some recommendations for school-based sexual education programs, youth counseling services, or community interventions for the target population could work more to prevent pre-marital sexual intercourse among adolescents of school age.

CONCLUSION

The prevalence of adolescents who were at risk of having sexual intercourse was 26.1%. The factors significantly associated with pre-marital sex are not having self-control and being in a relationship. Future studies can add more potential predictors to the study including the level of household, school, and community. The government needs to add the issue of pre-marital sex as well as the tendency to discontinue the study if pre-marital pregnancy occurs. Self-control can be strengthened by involving religious activity in school. To prevent pre-marital sex, the risk of engaging in relationships can be promoted by the school.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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