

Parental Communication as a Protective Factor Against Adolescent Risky Sexual Behavior: A Meta-Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Background: Adolescence is a significant developmental stage marked by notable physical, psychological, and social changes. Adolescent reproductive health surveys show that a number of teenagers report engaging in premarital sexual intercourse without fully understanding its social and health consequences. Given this phenomenon, it is crucial to understand the factors that can protect them from risky sexual behaviors, particularly starting from the family. This study aimed to estimate the impact of family communication on risky sexual behavior in adolescents.

Subjects and Method: This research is a meta-analysis and systematic review using the PRISMA diagram with PICO frame work (P= adolescent; I = parental communication; C= no parental communication; O= risky sexual behavior). Primary studies were searched through several indexing databases, including PubMed, Google Scholar, and ScienceDirect. Keywords used to facilitate the search for articles include: "parental participation," or "parental communication," or "family interaction," or "sexual risk" or "sexual risk behavior" AND "adults" or "adolescents." The inclusion criteria for this study are articles published using a cross-sectional study design up to 2024. The statistical analysis used in this study was conducted using the RevMan 5.4 meta-analysis program with both fixed effect and random effect approaches to present the data in the form of forest plots and funnel plots.

Results: A total 9 Articles were included in the meta-analysis. The results of the study show that adolescents with low family participation in sexual education, or in the absence of parental communication, are 1.46 times more likely to engage in risky sexual behavior compared to adolescents who receive sexual education or have parental communication, and this result is statistically significant (aOR= 1.46; CI 95%= 1.43 to 1.49; p<0.001).

Conclusion: adolescents with low family participation in sexual education, or in the absence of parental communication are more likely to engage in risky sexual behavior compared to adolescents who receive sexual education or have parental communication.

Keywords: adolescent, juvenile delinquency, parental communication, sexual behaviour, social interaction

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BACKGROUND

Adolescence is a significant developmental stage marked by substantial physical, psychological, and social changes. During this phase, adolescents undergo notable physical, emotional, and social transformations. They tend to seek self-identity and explore various aspects of life, including sexuality. At this stage, adolescents may engage in various forms of risky behavior, one of which is risky sexual behavior, such as premarital sex, unintended pregnancies, and the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), all of which can negatively impact their health and well-being (Bozzini et al., 2021).

Adolescent reproductive health surveys indicate that a number of adolescents report engaging in premarital sexual intercourse without fully understanding its social and health consequences. This study identifies four key variables of adolescent sexual behavior: frequency of sexual intercourse, condom use, number of sexual partners, and age at first sexual intercourse. The findings also highlight the importance of considering contraceptive use, the risk of sexually transmitted infections, and unintended pregnancies. These findings underscore the need to establish effective methods for preventing risky sexual behavior (Reis et al., 2023).

Risky sexual behavior among adolescents is a major public health concern, as it can lead to negative physical and mental health consequences (Ayalew et al., 2014). Effective communication between parents and children is a crucial component in protecting adolescents from engaging in risky sexual behavior. However, in many cultures, including Indonesia, sexuality remains a taboo topic within families (Caroline & Yunanto, 2020). Many parents feel uncomfortable or lack the knowledge to discuss these issues with their children. As a result, adolescents often seek information

from unreliable sources, such as peers or the internet, which can increase potential risks.

Social and environmental factors influence how adolescents perceive and manage issues related to sexuality. Social media, which has become an integral part of modern adolescent life, often provides inaccurate or biased information about sexuality (Uberty, 2022). This further highlights the critical role of parents in providing appropriate and clear guidance to their children. Open communication between parents and children can help counteract the negative influences of external environments.

Research findings indicate that one of the primary factors contributing to risky sexual behavior among adolescents is poor communication between parents and children. In reality, parental communication serves a protective function by providing information, guidance, and moral principles. Parents are the first and most important source for helping their children learn about sexuality. Through open and supportive communication, parents can equip their children with the knowledge, skills, and confidence necessary to make informed decisions about their sexuality (Dessie et al., 2015). This phenomenon highlights a critical gap in family communication patterns in Indonesia, particularly regarding discussions on sexuality.

Research on family communication and family interactions in reducing risky sexual behavior among adolescents is considered essential due to its relevance to adolescent reproductive health and overall well-being. In the long term, unsafe sexual behavior can have physical, emotional, and social consequences. One of the most effective ways to improve adolescent well-being is to reduce risky sexual behavior through family-centered approaches. Therefore, a

more comprehensive approach is needed to understand this relationship. Meta-analysis allows researchers to gain a broader and deeper understanding by identifying patterns, effects, and correlations across multiple studies. This study aims to estimate the influence of social interactions, specifically parental communication, on risky sexual behavior among adolescents.

SUBJECTS AND METHOD

1. Study Design

This meta-analysis was used to analyze relevant articles in estimating the magnitude of the influence of parental participation (parental communication) on risky sexual behavior in adolescents.

2. Steps of Meta- Analysis

The meta-analysis process began with a systematic literature search guided by the PICO framework (Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome). The PICO used in this review was: P = adolescents; I = parental communication; C = no parental communication; O = risky sexual behavior. To ensure a comprehensive search of relevant studies, specific keywords were applied, including "parental participation", "parental communication", "family interaction", "sexual risk", and "sexual risk behavior", combined with "adults" or "adolescents" using Boolean operators. Following the search, duplicate articles were removed, and the remaining studies were screened based on titles and abstracts according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Eligible full-text articles were then assessed for quality and relevance. Data extraction was conducted using a standardized form that recorded key study characteristics and outcomes. The extracted data were then synthesized using quantitative methods, where effect sizes were calculated and pooled using appropriate statistical models (fixed effects) depending on the heterogeneity

among studies. Heterogeneity was evaluated using the I^2 statistic, and potential publication bias was assessed using funnel plots. These steps ensured the validity, reliability, and transparency of the meta-analytic findings.

3. Inclusion Criteria

Research is included if: (1) The research is analyze the magnitude of the influence of parental participation (parental communication) on risky sexual behavior in adolescents published in English and Indonesian (2) an observational study with cross-sectional study design; (3) contain effect size of adjusted odd ratio (aOR); (4) the sample of study was teenager or adolescent.

4. Exclusion Criteria

Research is excluded if: (1) The research is published in languages other than English and Indonesian, this is due to the limitations of the researcher in translating the article; (2) qualitative articles or manuscripts that do not contain the value of the relationship size needed in the data analysis; (3) secondary works (e.g., article reviews, comments, editorials); (4) qualitative research (case studies, interviews, ethnography); (5) methodological research (instrument development, analysis techniques); and (6) exploratory research (preliminary study).

5. Operational Definition of Variables

Family Communication

The exchange of information, feelings, and meanings between family members through verbal and non-verbal messages. Effective family communication involves openness, understanding, and mutual respect, and it plays a crucial role in shaping attitudes and behaviors, including those related to health and sexuality.

No Family Communication The absence or lack of meaningful dialogue among family members, particularly between parents and children. This may involve avoid-

dance of sensitive topics, emotional distance, or communication barriers, which can lead to misinformation, misunderstanding, or lack of guidance on important issues such as sexual and reproductive health.

Risky Sexual Behavior Engagement in sexual activities that increase the likelihood of negative health outcomes, such as sexually transmitted infections, unplanned pregnancy, or emotional distress. Examples were having unprotected sex, multiple sexual partners, early sexual initiation, or sex under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

6. Study Instruments

This meta-analysis review was conducted by following the guidelines of Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) (Moher et al., 2009). Article searches are conducted using PubMed, Google Scholar, and ScienceDirect.

7. Population and Sample

The research participants in this primary article are teenagers spread across various countries. This study includes all published and unpublished cross-sectional studies of the influence of family communication or family interactions on risky sexual behavior in adolescents.

8. Data analysis

The data collected in this study was analyzed using the Review Manager data processing application (RevMan 5.4). Forest plots and funnel plots are used to determine the size of the influence and heterogeneity of the data. Data processing was carried out based on variations between studies, namely random effect model (REM) and fix effect model (FEM) (Schwarzer et al., 2015).

RESULTS

1. Sample Characteristic

A total of 772 primary studies were identified from various search databases. Out of

these, 119 studies were excluded due to duplication, leaving 653 screened articles for further assessment. After further evaluation based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, 621 articles were excluded for the following reasons: irrelevant titles, not being cross-sectional studies, not written in Indonesian or English, and not being full-text articles.

The majority of the studies (five out of nine) were conducted in Ethiopia, highlighting a strong body of regional evidence from sub-Saharan Africa. The remaining studies were carried out in the United States (three studies, including one from Texas) and Tanzania (one study), offering comparative perspectives from different cultural and socioeconomic contexts.

Eligible full-text articles were then further screened by reviewing the complete manuscripts. An additional 23 articles were excluded because their outcomes were not related to risky sexual behavior, they did not include an intervention on family communication, or they did not provide multivariate analysis results necessary for assessing relationships or effects using the data processing application RevMan 5.4.

The final selected articles were then assessed for quality using the critical appraisal checklist from The Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI). All articles met the criteria for systematic review and meta-analysis, resulting in a total of 9 articles included in this systematic review and meta-analysis.

The critical appraisal of the nine primary articles using the CASP checklist reveals that all studies scored the maximum total of 22 out of 22 points, indicating high methodological quality across the board (table 1). Each study received a score of 2 ("Yes") for all 11 appraisal criteria. This uniform high score suggests that the selected articles are methodologically robust, free from major biases, and reliable

in their findings. Moreover, the consistency of the quality across studies enhances the credibility and strength of the meta-analysis, reducing the risk of flawed conclusions due to low-quality evidence. The

inclusion of studies from both African (particularly Ethiopian) and U.S. contexts also increases the generalizability and cross-cultural relevance of the meta-analysis findings.

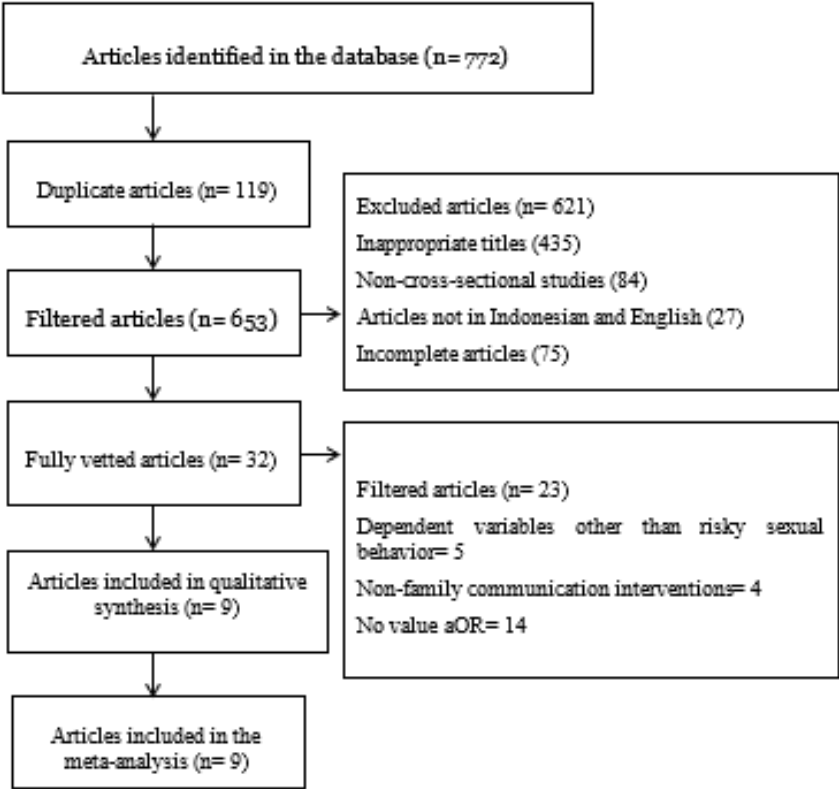


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram the Effect of Family Communication on Risky Sexual Behavior in Adolescents

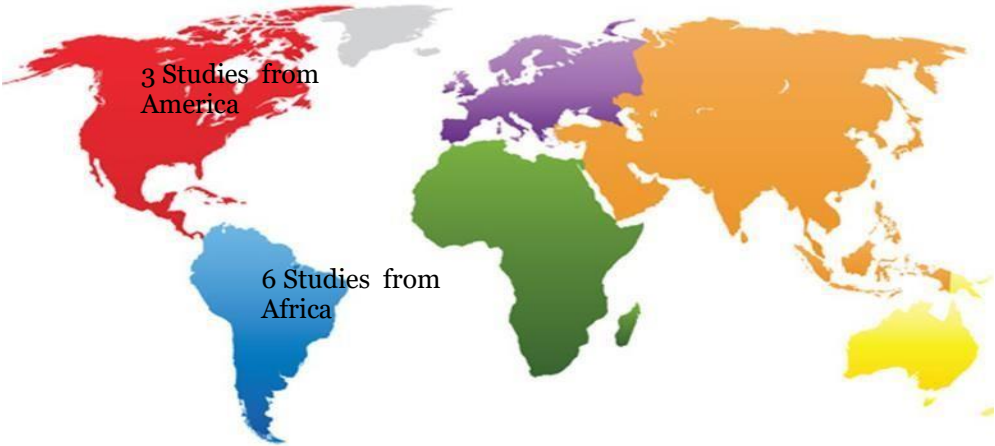


Figure 2. Map of the Research on the Effect of Family Communication on Risky Sexual Behavior in Adolescents

Table 1. Critical Appraisal Skills Programme of the Article on the Effect of Family Communication on Risky Sexual Behavior in Adolescents

Primary Article	Criteria											Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
Alemu et al., (2018)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	22
Bizuwork et al., (2022)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	22
Wakasa et al., (2021)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	22
Jones et al., (2017)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	22
Mlunde et al., (2012)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	22
Morales-Campos et al., (2012)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	22
Patel et al., (2021)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	22
Yemane Berhanie, (2015)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	22
Yimer & Ashebir, (2019)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	22

Question Description:

1. Does this study address a clear and focused issue?
2. Were the subjects recruited in an acceptable way?
3. Was the exposure measured accurately to minimize bias?
4. Were the outcomes measured accurately to minimize bias?
5. Have the authors identified all important confounding factors?
6. Have they taken account of the confounding factors in the design and/or analysis?

7. Was the follow-up of subjects sufficiently complete?
8. Was the follow-up period long enough?
9. Do you believe the results?
10. Can the results be applied to the local population?
11. Are the results of this study consistent with other available evidence?

Criteria:

- No = 0
Unclear = 1
Yes = 2

Table 2. Summary of Articles Worthy of Inclusion in a Quantitative Synthesis Meta-Analysis on the Effect of Family Communication on Risky Sexual Behavior in

Author & Year	Country	Sample	P (Intervention)	I (Comparison)	C (Control)	O (Outcome)
Alemu et al., (2018)	Ethiopia	1,067	School Children	Family communication	No family communication	Risky sexual behavior
Bizuwork et al., (2022)	Ethiopia	338	High School Adolescents	Positive communication	No family communication	Risky sexual behavior
Wakasa et al., (2021)	Ethiopia	352	High School Adolescents	Family communication	No family communication	Risky sexual behavior
Jones et al., (2017)	USA	702	Black Male Adolescents	High family participation	Low family participation	Risky sexual behavior
Mlunde et al., (2012)	Tanzania	2,217	High School Adolescents	Positive communication	No family communication	Risky sexual behavior
Morales-Campos et al., (2012)	Texas, USA	655	Middle School Students	Family communication	No family communication	Risky sexual behavior
Patel et al., (2021)	USA	543	Female Adolescents	Positive interaction	No sexual communication	Risky sexual behavior

Author & Year	Country	Sample	P (Intervention)	I (Comparison)	C (Control)	O (Outcome)
Yemane Berhanie, (2015)	Ethiopia	406	School Children	Positive communication	No family communication	Risky sexual behavior
Yimer & Ashebir, (2019)	Ethiopia	723	School Children	Family communication	No family communication	Risky sexual behavior

Table 3. Data adjusted odd ratio (aOR) and CI 95% primary article on the effect of parental communication on sexually risky behaviors in adolescents

Author (year)	aOR	CI 95%	
		Lower	Upper
Alemu et al., (2018)	2.63	1.12	6.19
Bizuwork et al., (2022)	1.11	0.49	2.52
Wakasa et al., (2021)	2.33	1.14	4.76
Jones et al., (2017)	1.46	1.43	1.48
Mlunde et al., (2012)	1.54	0.71	3.37
Morales-Campos et al., (2012)	1.51	1.34	0.75
Patel et al., (2021)	1.40	0.26	7.62
Yemane Berhanie, (2015)	1.52	1.32	4.92
Yimer & Ashebir, (2019)	0.81	0.51	1.28

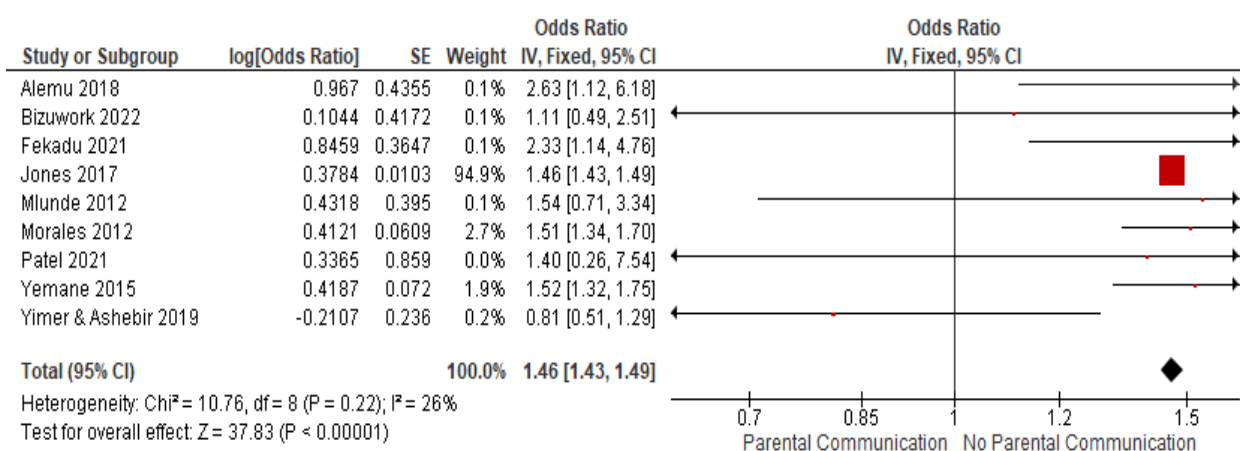


Figure 3. Forest plot of study analyzing the impact of family communication on risky sexual behavior in adolescents

The forest plot in Figure 3 demonstrates the effect of family communication on risky sexual behavior. Adolescents whose families have low participation in sexual education are 1.46 times more likely to engage in risky sexual behavior compared to those who receive sexual education or have parental communication, and this finding is statistically significant (aOR =

1.46; 95% CI = 1.43 to 1.49; $p < 0.001$). The forest plot also shows low heterogeneity in effect estimates across all primary studies ($I^2 = 26\%$; $p = 0.22$), indicating that the variation in effect estimates among the included studies in this meta-analysis is low. Therefore, the average effect estimate was calculated using the fixed-effect model (FEM) approach.

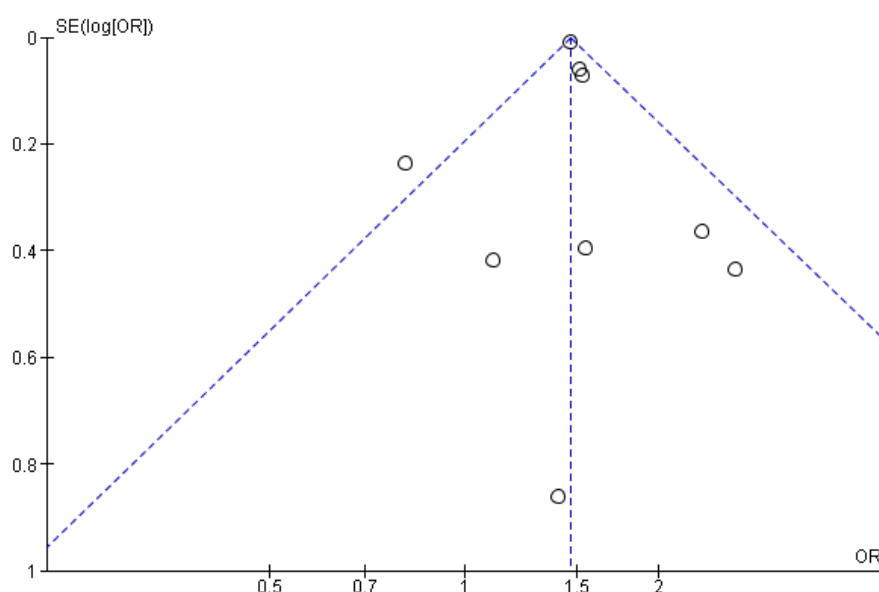


Figure 4. Funnel plot of study analyzing the impact of family communication on risky sexual behavior in adolescents

Figure 4 presents a funnel plot illustrating the effect of family communication on risky sexual behavior. The funnel plot indicates that the distribution of effects is more concentrated on the right side rather than the left side of the vertical average line, suggesting the presence of publication bias. Since the distribution of effects is predominantly on the right side of the vertical average line—aligned with the position of the overall effect estimate (represented by the diamond shape) on the right side of the null hypothesis (o) line in the forest plot—this publication bias tends to overestimate the true effect.

DISCUSSION

Effective family communication and healthy interactions between parents and adolescents have been proven to be significant protective factors in reducing juvenile delinquency, particularly risky sexual behavior. During this stage, adolescents require guidance, clear information, and support from their families to help them grow into positive individuals.

Open and constructive family communication plays a crucial role in shaping adolescent behavior and development. In the context of sexual development, effective fami-

ly communication serves as a protective factor that reduces the likelihood of adolescents engaging in risky sexual behavior. Conversely, the absence of effective family communication can increase the likelihood of adolescents engaging in such behaviors (Hasanah et al., 2020).

When adolescents lack access to accurate and healthy sexual information from parents or other family members, they tend to seek information from other sources that may not be reliable, such as peers, social media, or even pornography. These sources often provide misleading portrayals of sexual relationships, which in turn may encourage unsafe sexual behavior (Caroline & Yunanto, 2020).

Open communication about sexual issues at home not only provides accurate information but also allows parents to establish clear norms, habits, and expectations regarding healthy and responsible sexual relationships (Afriani, 2022). Adolescents may feel confused or anxious about their sexual feelings if such communication is absent, potentially leading to risky exploration or poor sexual choices. Furthermore, the parent-adolescent relationship, which often

requires emotional support, can be affected by a lack of family communication. A study by Alamsyah (2023) found that a lack of emotional closeness can make adolescents feel isolated and seek attention or validation from external sources, including sexual partners. As they look for validation or attention from these external sources, the risk of engaging in risky sexual behavior increases.

Additionally, family communication enables parents to monitor adolescent activities effectively without appearing overly restrictive. Every family should establish and maintain good communication quality with their adolescent children, as this makes it easier for parents to guide and direct them away from behaviors that could jeopardize their future (Sa'diyah & Rahmasari, 2020). Emotional closeness within the family, in addition to open communication, also plays a role in reducing juvenile delinquency, including risky sexual behavior. Emotionally supportive families help adolescents avoid social pressure or stress. Adolescents may engage in delinquent behavior, including risky sexual activities, due to peer pressure, a desire for acceptance, or loneliness. When families provide strong emotional support, adolescents are better equipped to handle these challenges positively and are less likely to seek escape through harmful behaviors (Thoyibah, 2021).

A child's discomfort in communicating with parents can lead to uncertainty in decision-making, ultimately affecting their ability to make wise and responsible choices regarding sexual behavior. Families that do not provide opportunities for open discussions may hinder adolescents' social and emotional development, which is essential for making healthy and mature decisions (Zahra & Madya, 2024).

Therefore, enhancing family communication, especially concerning sexual education based on values that support safe and responsible behavior, is crucial in reducing adolescents' tendency toward risky sexual

behavior. The absence of effective family communication not only limits adolescents' access to necessary information but also exacerbates the risk of engaging in risky sexual activities. Strengthening open, empathetic, and educational family communication is thus a critical step in preventing behaviors that may endanger adolescents' health and well-being.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

JTA: Conceptualization, Methodology, Supervision, Writing – Review & Editing; AFH: Data Collection, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft; AW: Investigation, Resources, Data Validation; ASM: Statistical Analysis, Visualization, Manuscript Formatting; HA: Literature Review, Data Curation; THD: Writing – Review & Editing, Project Administration.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There was no conflict of interest in this study.

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