

Understanding Oneself for a Better Future: Reproductive Health Awareness for Adolescent Boys and Girls

Dewi Nurhanifah^{1*}, Septia Maharani Putri¹

¹Department of Nursing, University of Muhammadiyah Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan, Indonesia.

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ABSTRACT Adolescence is a critical period marked by significant physical, emotional, and psychological changes, especially regarding reproductive health. However, lacking access to accurate and age-appropriate information often leads to misunderstandings and risky behaviors. This community service program aims to increase awareness and understanding of reproductive health among adolescent boys and girls. The activity was conducted through interactive health education sessions, group discussions, and question-and-answer segments involving junior and senior high school students in Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan. The topics included puberty, reproductive system anatomy, personal hygiene, prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and the importance of making informed and responsible decisions. The results showed increased knowledge and positive attitude shifts toward reproductive health among participants, as assessed through pre- and post-activity questionnaires. This program highlights the importance of early and inclusive reproductive health education to support the development of healthy, confident, and responsible young individuals.



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*Corresponding author: Dewi Nurhanifah

Department of Nursing, University of Muhammadiyah Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan, Indonesia

Email: dewi.nurhanifah@gmail.com

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1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a pivotal stage in human development, characterized by rapid physical, emotional, and social changes. Adolescents aged 10–19 constitute over 16% of the global population, and their health and well-being are foundational to sustainable development (Nurafriani et al., 2025). Among the critical areas of adolescent health is reproductive health, which encompasses the biological aspects of growth and puberty and psychosocial dimensions such as relationships, consent, and decision-making (Nurhanifah & Kharitilpa, 2025). Despite the growing recognition of the importance of adolescent reproductive health, many young people, especially in developing regions such as Southeast Asia, continue to face barriers to accessing accurate, age-appropriate, and culturally sensitive information (Turnip & Kamso, 2024).

This information gap often leads to misconceptions, risky sexual behaviors, early pregnancies, gender-based violence, and exposure to sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV (Suprpto et al., 2025). Adolescence is a pivotal

developmental phase marked by rapid physical, cognitive, and psychosocial changes, including puberty and sexual maturation (Hijrah et al., 2025). Reproductive health education during adolescence is essential to equip young people with the knowledge, skills, and values to make informed decisions regarding their bodies, relationships, and overall well-being (Millanzi et al., 2022). However, many adolescents, especially in developing countries like Indonesia, still face limited access to accurate and age-appropriate reproductive health information due to cultural taboos, lack of formal education, and insufficient parental or institutional support (Cini et al., 2023). Studies have consistently shown that early and comprehensive reproductive health education can significantly reduce the risk of early pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and gender-based violence while also promoting gender equality and respect for bodily autonomy. Yet, the gap between knowledge and behavior remains wide, particularly among adolescents in rural and semi-urban areas, where myths, stigma, and misinformation are prevalent (Sarintohe et al., 2022).

Indonesia faces unique demographic challenges as the world's fourth most populous country. Adolescents lack comprehensive knowledge about their reproductive anatomy and rights (Utomo et al., 2022). Furthermore, sociocultural taboos often prevent open discussions about these topics both in families and schools, especially for boys, who are frequently excluded from reproductive health education (Mohd. Tohit & Haque, 2024). Community-based health education interventions have shown promising results in addressing these issues by promoting awareness, building positive attitudes, and empowering adolescents to make informed decisions. Therefore, through participatory learning methods, this community service initiative aims to provide inclusive and engaging reproductive health education for adolescent boys and girls in Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan. By fostering self-awareness and knowledge, the program aspires to contribute to a healthier and more informed generation.

2. METHOD

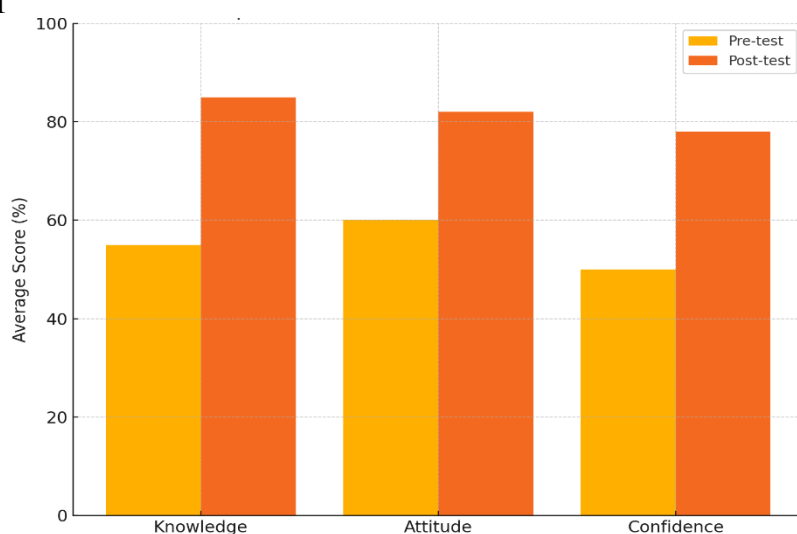
This community service activity used a participatory and educative approach to engage adolescent participants in active reproductive health learning. The program targeted students aged 12–18 from selected junior and senior high schools in Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan, Indonesia. Needs Assessment. Before implementation, a preliminary survey was conducted using questionnaires to assess participants' baseline knowledge, attitudes, and common misconceptions regarding reproductive health. Discussions were also held with school authorities and local health workers to identify priority issues and cultural considerations.

Program Design. Based on the assessment, the content was tailored to address key topics, including Puberty and physical changes; Reproductive system anatomy and function; Personal hygiene during adolescence; Prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs); Gender equality and reproductive rights; Educational materials were developed using youth-friendly language, visuals, and interactive components such as games and case studies. Implementation. The intervention was

conducted through two main sessions: A health education seminar using multimedia presentations facilitated by nursing lecturers and health professionals. Small group discussions and Q&A sessions allow participants to ask questions anonymously and receive personalized answers. Evaluation. Pre- and post-tests were administered to measure knowledge improvement and attitude change. In addition, feedback forms were distributed to evaluate participants' satisfaction and engagement. Follow-up. Recommendations for continuous reproductive health education were provided to schools. Information materials were left for use by teachers and health units (UKS) as ongoing resources.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT



Grafis 1. Comparison chart of Pre-test and Post-test results on three main aspects: Knowledge, Attitude, and Confidence. There was a significant improvement in all aspects after reproductive health counseling was carried out.

The pre-test and post-test comparison illustrates a significant improvement in participants' knowledge, attitude, and confidence regarding reproductive health following the educational intervention. *Knowledge* The average knowledge score increased from 55% to 85%, indicating that the participants gained a substantial understanding of topics such as puberty, reproductive anatomy, hygiene, and STI prevention. This suggests that the materials and delivery methods effectively addressed previous knowledge gaps. *Attitude* A shift in mentality was also observed, with scores rising from 60% to 82%. This reflects greater openness, responsibility, and respect among participants regarding reproductive health issues. The interactive and non-judgmental environment likely contributed to this positive change. *Confidence*. Perhaps most notable is the increase in confidence, from 50% to 78%. This demonstrates that students felt more empowered to discuss and manage reproductive health matters after the session. Anonymous Q&A segments and group discussions may have played a key role in fostering a safe space for expression. The intervention successfully enhanced all measured aspects of adolescent reproductive health awareness. These results support the importance of continuous, youth-friendly

education efforts, particularly in settings where such topics are often under-discussed due to cultural or institutional barriers.

DISCUSSION

The pre-test and post-test evaluation results showed a significant increase in adolescents' knowledge, attitudes, and confidence related to reproductive health. These findings indicate that the educational approach used in this community service activity has proven effective in conveying information previously not widely known by participants.

Knowledge Enhancement increased knowledge scores from 55% to 85%, indicating that most participants previously had limited information related to reproductive health. Many adolescents, especially in developing countries, do not receive adequate reproductive health education due to stigma, social norms, or lack of integration of materials in the school curriculum (Schaaf et al., 2022a). The material presented in this session, including the topics of puberty, the reproductive system, personal hygiene, and prevention of sexually transmitted infections, seemed to be highly relevant and appropriate to their needs (Schaaf et al., 2022b). Highlights the effectiveness of the educational approach in delivering complex information in a way that is accessible and engaging for adolescents. This suggests that many of the participants entered the program with a limited or inaccurate understanding of reproductive health, likely due to insufficient coverage of the topic in school curricula or prevailing cultural taboos that discourage open discussion. Integrating multimedia presentations, interactive sessions, and relatable examples likely played a pivotal role in making the content understandable and relevant (Mahdi, 2022a).

The change in attitude scores that increased from 60% to 82% reflects a positive change in participants' perceptions of reproductive health issues. This is important because healthy behavior changes always begin with a supportive attitude (Mahdi, 2022b). Group discussion methods and information delivery with a non-judgmental approach are likely to help create a safe and comfortable atmosphere for participants to be open to new perspectives (Cruz et al., 2025). In addition, separating groups by gender during discussions allows participants more freedom to express personal opinions and questions that were previously taboo to discuss openly. Reflects a growing acceptance and appreciation of the importance of reproductive health (Towler et al., 2021). This is especially important in adolescent development, where values and beliefs solidify. The program may have challenged harmful stereotypes or misconceptions often shaped by peer influence, media, or societal norms by framing discussions around respect, bodily autonomy, and healthy relationships. These attitudinal shifts are essential in shaping future behaviors, such as delaying early sexual activity, practicing consent, and seeking help when needed (Shmidova & Mikhaylova, 2025).

The increase in self-confidence from 50% to 78% indicates that participants feel better able to recognize, understand, and maintain their reproductive health. This

is especially important, considering that teenagers often experience doubt or embarrassment when asking questions or seeking information about their bodies and sexuality (Nguyen et al., 2024). Participatory-based interventions such as anonymous Q&A and real-life case simulations allow participants to explore their active role in maintaining reproductive health, including responsible decision-making. Indicating a notable improvement in the participants' comfort level when discussing reproductive health (Qiu et al., 2025). This is a key outcome, as lack of confidence often prevents adolescents from asking questions, reporting abuse, or accessing health services. Using anonymous question boxes, open dialogue, and peer discussion groups likely created a safe space where students felt validated and supported. These findings resonate with global best practices, which advocate for participatory, non-judgmental approaches in adolescent health education (Newman-Sanders et al., 2024).

These results suggest that even short-term interventions can have a meaningful impact if thoughtfully designed and delivered with empathy. However, for long-term behavioral change, it is essential to ensure continuity. Involving parents, school teachers, and community health workers in follow-up sessions or peer-led programs can help reinforce key messages. Additionally, integrating reproductive health education into school curricula and extracurricular activities can institutionalize these benefits. The findings underscore the importance of proactive, inclusive, and contextually sensitive reproductive health education for adolescents. When given the correct information in the right way, adolescents are not only capable of understanding sensitive topics; they are eager to learn and apply them. Future programs should aim to scale up such efforts, ensuring that no adolescent is left without the tools to understand themselves and secure a healthier future.

4. CONCLUSION

This community service initiative successfully improved adolescents' knowledge, attitudes, and confidence regarding reproductive health through an interactive, inclusive, and youth-friendly educational approach. The significant increase in post-test scores across all measured aspects demonstrates the program's effectiveness in addressing the information gap among young people, particularly in areas where reproductive health is rarely discussed openly. The results affirm that comprehensive and culturally sensitive reproductive health education can empower adolescents to understand their bodies, make informed decisions, and adopt healthy behaviors. Moreover, by fostering a safe learning environment and promoting open dialogue, the program helped reduce stigma and encouraged respectful communication about sensitive issues. Continuous collaboration between schools, health professionals, parents, and community stakeholders is essential to sustain these positive outcomes. Integrating reproductive health education into school curricula and extracurricular activities can serve as a long-term strategy to support adolescent well-being and promote a healthier, more informed generation.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

All authors declare no conflict of interest in this community service program.

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