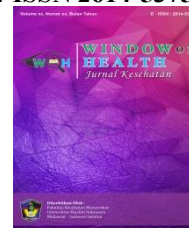




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Adolescents' Coping Strategies To Adapt To High-Risk Sexual Behavior Urges In Boarding Houses

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ABSTRACT

The current adolescent environment increasingly offers many choices. Dating styles that open up opportunities for risky sexual behavior seem to be an attractive offer, especially for adolescents who live in boarding houses. Living in boarding houses without direct supervision from parents and boarding house owners makes adolescents free to do anything, including risky sexual behavior with their boyfriends. This makes boarding houses a dangerous environment for adolescents who live there. This study uses a Descriptive Phenomenology Design, which aims to study in depth how adolescents use coping strategies to adapt to the urge to have risky sexual behavior in boarding houses. Six participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique for this study. The analysis in this study used the Colaizzi method. The results of this study yielded four themes, namely: 1) setting boundaries for dating, 2) rejecting pressure, 3) not wanting to fail, and 4) doing activities in their spare time. This study concludes that adolescents who have good coping strategies will be able to adapt to the urge to engage in risky sexual behavior in boarding houses. This study recommends increasing parental and community control and increasing the role of community nurses through adolescent health programs in the community, such as teenage health posts and Adolescent Health Care programs in schools.

Keywords: Coping strategies; adolescents; risky sexual behavior; boarding houses

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INTRODUCTION

Premarital sexual behaviour among adolescents is currently quite a concern for all groups. Data from the 2023 Indonesian Health Survey shows that the percentage of premarital sexual behaviour among adolescents varies. In adolescents aged 15-19 years, the rate of men who have had premarital sex is 3.6%, while in adolescents aged 20-24 years, it reaches 14%. On the other hand, 5.3% of adolescents have had premarital sex, but only 36% have been taught how to refuse sexual advances. In addition, the Indonesian Health Survey 2023 data also noted that 64.4% of women aged 10-19 years have been pregnant, and 12.8% are currently pregnant. (1). Meanwhile, in Ambon City, it was found that around 62.1% of adolescents have watched pornographic videos, and around 42.7% think that hugging is a common thing. Around 10.8% of adolescents have had premarital sex. The number of male adolescents who engage in risky sexual behaviour is 61.4%, while the number of female adolescents who engage in risky sexual behaviour is 26.4% (2)(3).

The impact of risky sexual behaviour carried out by adolescents is the occurrence of unwanted pregnancies. (4). Data on unwanted pregnancies according to the 2023 Indonesian Health Survey shows that 17.5% of total pregnancies in Indonesia are unwanted pregnancies that occur in adolescence. (1). Another impact is Sexually Transmitted Infections with the number of sufferers in Ambon City in 2023 reached 613 sufferers, compared to 2022, when there were only 278 people, with the highest prevalence being gonorrhoea, chlamydia, and syphilis in the 15-24 age group, while HIV/AIDS cases increased to 376/34, compared to the previous 171/18 instances(5).

Risky sexual behaviour is more common in high school students due to alcohol consumption, smoking, use of illegal substances, peer pressure, and violation of family control (6)(7). Teenagers who live in boarding houses without parental supervision have twice the risk of engaging in risky sexual behaviour. (8). Factors that underlie teenagers having free sex in boarding houses are low attention or supervision given by parents and boarding house owners, no commitment to look after each other during dating, meeting partners more often without strong self-control, misuse of trust from partners and parents, and a blanket of faith foundation that is easy to influence (9)(10).

The freedom offered requires teenagers to build their coping strategies well. Effective coping strategies will result in good adaptation. Conversely, ineffective coping strategies will result in avoidance and social problems for the teenagers. Along with the many stressors in the environment where teenagers socialise, coping strategies sometimes fail to work effectively, making teenagers easily influenced (11)(12). The inability to control themselves causes teenagers to have low self-regulation. It causes involvement in risky sexual behaviour that can cause serious problems such as sexually transmitted diseases, disability, and death(13). Teenagers who do not engage in free sex are caused by adaptive coping mechanisms in dealing with adverse environmental influences, conversely revealing

that poor coping strategies will have an impact on the emergence of free sex behaviour in teenagers due to the hostile environment where the teenagers socialise (14,15).

Various boarding houses were found based on the observations conducted in two sub-districts, namely Nusaniwe sub-district and Teluk Ambon sub-district. Some are specifically for women, and others are mixed for women and men. The rules made in each boarding house are also different. Some are guarded directly by the owner or guardian of the boarding house, but most are free without a boarding house guard. On average, boarding houses have boarding house rules, but because they do not live with the boarding house owner, the rules are not obeyed because no one controls them. This allows boarding house children to be freer to go out at night, bring girlfriends to the boarding house, and even live together. It can have a bad influence on other teenagers if they do not have a coping strategy to survive and not be affected. This study aims to describe in depth the coping strategies teenagers use to adapt to a risky boarding house environment.

METHOD

The research method used is qualitative with a phenomenological approach to explore the experiences of adolescents living in an environment that is at risk of premarital sexual behaviour. (16,17). This research was conducted in the Nusaniwe District and the Teluk Ambon District, Ambon City, for 1 month. Participants in this study numbered 6 people who were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The inclusion criteria for participants were adolescents at the high school level, living in boarding houses (minimum 6 months), and willing to participate in the research. Data was collected through in-depth face-to-face interviews for 45-60 minutes and recorded with a tape recorder. Participants were initially asked an open question, namely "How is your experience living in a boarding house without parental supervision?" and then continued until the data reached saturation or no new data was found. Interviews were conducted in the Maluku regional language.

The data were analysed using the Colaizzi method with the following steps: a) each transcript was reread to obtain a general understanding of the entire content, b) extracting important statements for each related transcript, c) formulating the meaning of the essential statements, d) sorting the formulated meanings into themes, e) integrating the findings into a complete description of the phenomenon in this study, f) describing the basic structure of the phenomenon, and g) validating the findings. (16,17). Data from interviews with participants were conducted in the Maluku language and were translated into Indonesian and English for publication only. The translated version of the research results was ensured to have the same meaning as the original data and was confirmed by the English editor and nursing experts.

The accuracy of this study was ensured by using a peer-checking method by an independent auditor or expert/professor in qualitative research who systematically evaluated and analysed all data

and compared and contrasted the data's quality, transparency, and interpretation. In addition, member-checking was also carried out to confirm the findings and avoid bias or imagination from the researcher.

This study has gone through an ethical test by the ethics committee of the Faculty of Nursing, University of Indonesia, with approval number 225/UN2.F12.D/HKP.02.04/2017. Before data collection, each participant signed a written consent and was informed of the research procedure. Each participant can withdraw from this study without being subject to any sanctions, and the researcher guarantees the confidentiality of participant data.

RESULTS

The characteristics of the participants in this study consisted of four women and two men, with an age range of 15-17 years. All participants lived in boarding houses for 1 to 2 years. Participants were high school and vocational high school students.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

Participant Characteristics	Sub Characteristics Participants	Participant Code
Age	15 years	P1, P3
	16 years	P4
	17 years	P2, P5, P6
Gender	Female	P1, P2, P3, P4
	Male	P5, P6
Type of education	Senior High School	P1, P2, P4, P6
	Vocational School	P3, P5
length of stay in a boarding house	1 year	P1, P3, P4
	2 years	P2, P5, P6

This study produced four themes: 1) Creating boundaries in dating; 2) Rejecting pressure; 3) Fear of failure; 4) Doing activities in free time.

Theme 1. Creating boundaries in dating provides an overview of how participants create boundaries by determining things allowed during dating, namely, only encouraging each other or helping with schoolwork, in addition to physical touch permitted, only holding hands and embracing shoulders. Meanwhile, things that are not allowed during dating include bringing a girlfriend to the boarding house and having premarital sex. This is as expressed below:

"I date only to motivate each other to achieve success, help each other when I have trouble doing schoolwork, or walk me home. It doesn't matter if you hold each other's hands or put your arm around each other's shoulders, the important thing is not to have sex" (P1)

"We only went home together, although on the way he often held my hand or put his arm around my shoulder, but it didn't get to the point of sleeping together" (P2)

"If there is homework that needs my boyfriend's help, then I will contact him to ask for help. We encourage each other when we have a lot of homework and go home from school together. So I feel protected, not to the point of living together" (P3)

"just to encourage each other, help each other when doing homework. Not doing things like husband and wife in boarding houses" (P4)

"We just motivate each other, then help each other complete housework. Holding each other's hands when crossing the street or putting our arms around each other's shoulders. Although it is not allowed by religion because we are not mahram, I try to be a protector only without having sex" (P5)

"So we just met at school and then walked together after school, motivating and protecting each other. Not doing other things like married people." (P6)

Theme 2. Rejecting pressure provides an overview of how participants reject pressure given by peers or boyfriends, including by providing a positive understanding that they should not do things that can destroy their future; saying not to come to the boarding house because they are afraid; and by ignoring every invitation or pressure given by their friends. This is as expressed below:

"I provide a positive understanding that it is not necessary to live together in a boarding room, let alone have sexual relations" (P1)

"I immediately refuse if my boyfriend wants to come to the boarding room, especially if it is only the two of us" (P2)

"I talk to him in a good way, so that it is not necessary to come to the boarding house, let alone have sexual relations" (P3)

"I say that it is not allowed to come to the boarding house, let alone do things like husband and wife" (P4)

"I just ignore it if there is an invitation to the boarding house because I don't want to do things that could lead me to adultery" (P5)

"I don't want to bring my boyfriend to the boarding house, let alone just live together in a room or sit in a dark place. I just ignore it if there is an invitation like that" (P6)

Theme 3. Not wanting to fail provides a picture of the participants' fear of failure that occurs due to premarital sexual behaviour that is carried out like other people's previous experiences, and having hopes for a better future, and wanting to make their parents happy with the success they achieve later. This is as expressed below:

"I learned from the experiences of others who have failed, so that motivated me not to fail like that, I want to be successful so that I can make my parents happy" (P1)

"I want to be successful so that I can make my parents proud. I don't want to be like them who live freely like that and then end up pregnant and drop out of school." (P2)

"I don't want to be like some people in the village who have dropped out of school because they are pregnant. That makes my parents sad. I just want to be successful" (P3)

"I want to be successful, I'm afraid of failing, especially because I'm pregnant like them, that will make my parents sad" (P4)

"I don't want to be like my brother in the village who dropped out of school. He had to get married because his girlfriend was pregnant at the time. I want to be successful to make my parents happy" (P5)

"I don't want to fail and live a hard life like them. I don't want to make my parents sad because I failed" (P6)

Theme 4. Doing activities in free time describes how participants use their free time to divert their attention from various negative influences of the surrounding environment by participating in organisational activities both at school and church or mosque; some use their free time to draw or design houses because it is part of the knowledge at their school; and approaching God through prayer to be strengthened to stay away from risky behavior. This is as expressed below:

"I always involve myself in every organisation at school and in the community, such as the church youth organisation" (P1)

"I prefer to busy myself with organisational activities both at school and at church" (P2)

"I participate more in worship groups or extracurricular activities at school so that I don't focus on negative things" (P3)

"I spend my time with activities at school or church youth activities, or I just stay in my room reading novels" (P4)

"If there is no homework, I draw more or make house designs to hone my skills. I also divert my mind by praying five times a day" (P5)

"I keep myself busy with religious activities at church or school so that when I finish my activities, I can immediately rest" (P6)

DISCUSSION

Create dating boundaries

Participants set boundaries in their dating by determining things that can be done during dating, namely, only encouraging each other or helping with schoolwork. Meanwhile, things that are not allowed to be done during dating include bringing a girlfriend to the boarding house and having premarital sex. Creating boundaries in dating that teenagers make for things that are allowed and not allowed to be done in dating is a coping strategy used to face the challenges of premarital sexual relationships in boarding houses. (12,18). Setting boundaries helps teenagers constructively and proactively adapt to the pressures and challenges that arise in dating relationships. (19). This strategy can also be used to avoid greater pressure in a relationship or restrictions on smoking and substance use from peers. (20–22)

Another interesting thing the participants expressed was that they could hold hands and embrace each other's shoulders to kiss foreheads during dating. However, it was not realised that the form of premarital sexual behaviour had started with touching, for example, touching fingers or hands, holding hands, then hugging, for example, embracing the shoulders and body of the partner. (23). Premarital sexual behaviour is closely related to the intensity of adolescent dating styles that involve physical contact (24).

Rejecting pressure

Participants rejected pressure from their boyfriends by expressing a positive understanding that they should not come to the boarding house and should not do things that could destroy their future, and by ignoring every invitation or pressure from their boyfriends.

Peer pressure is a negative behaviour that is the most dominant factor influencing risky behaviours in adolescents (25). Having a boyfriend or girlfriend and friends who have had premarital sex makes adolescents five times more likely to have sex soon compared to those who do not. (26). This is in line with several other related studies that Peers can have a negative influence on adolescents to consume alcohol and engage in risky sexual behaviour (27).

Adolescents who have low parental involvement and are unable to resist peer pressure or influence will be more easily trapped in sexual behaviour. (28,29). Peer pressure provides a greater opportunity for depressive symptoms (30). This makes it necessary for adolescents to have coping skills to reject any peer pressure. Poor refusal skills, assertive skills, problem-solving skills, and adolescent self-control skills will be related to the occurrence of risky sexual behaviour(15,31).

Not wanting to fail

Participants did not want to fail like others, which describes the participants' fear of other people's previous experiences of feeling the impact of unwanted pregnancies. This is in line with research conducted on young Indian women who chose not to have sex because of fear of the effect of sex on adolescents, having a life goal of continuing higher education, and also because they had seen examples of parents or other siblings who were pregnant at a young age and thus lived in poverty because they did not have decent jobs (32).

Participants also have hopes for a better future by continuing their education to a higher level so that they can make their parents happy. This shows that participants have the coping skills to care about themselves and perform better under pressure (33,34).

Life principles are a draft or concept of the life we will live. These principles generally follow religion and norms that apply in society. With life principles, a person will create or form an identity that makes a person not easily influenced by the environment in which he is (35). The ability of participants to use coping strategies cannot be separated from parental support. The role of parents is closely related to the incidence of premarital sex in adolescents, where if the relationship with parents is good, it is more likely for adolescents to postpone involvement in sexual relations. This shows that parents need to continue to control their children to avoid risky sexual behaviour (25).

Reasonable control can prevent teenagers from engaging in potentially deviant behaviour. (27,33). Parents who communicate and have positive control over their teenagers increase their trust in them; conversely, if parents do not speak and have negative control, the teenagers will decrease their trust in them. (36). Teenagers eventually carry the values held by their parents, not because of innate factors but because of the education and socialization process from parents to their children. Values become guidelines for actions, ideas, beliefs, and attitudes that bind every family member in a common culture, so that good values can shape good behaviour in the family(35).

Doing activities in free time

Participants use their free time to divert their attention from various negative influences of the surrounding environment by participating in organisational activities at school or in the community; some use their free time to draw or design houses because it is part of the knowledge at their school, and participate in religious activities.

Participants are always busy with various activities, indicating that adolescents divert their attention to positive things to not focus on the problems that occur (37). This shows that adolescents have good coping skills because they can divert their problems to practical activities or behaviours such as sports, and are actively involved in social activities in the community, such as youth organisations or religion. The increasing number of practical activities that adolescents have can minimise negative behaviour in any form, such as smoking, using drugs and alcohol, and premarital sexual behaviour(35).

Also, several studies related to coping used by adolescents have shown that strengthening positive problem-solving skills can help them effectively overcome various stress triggers. (38). Some strategies include time management, adapting to pressure and deadlines, and balancing academic and non-academic life(11).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that adolescents who have good coping strategies will be able to adapt to the urge to engage in risky sexual behavior in the boarding house environment. The coping strategies used are setting boundaries for dating, rejecting pressure, not wanting to fail, and doing activities in their free time. The results of this study recommend increasing parental and community control and expanding the role of community nurses through adolescent health programs in the community, such as teenage posyandu and the Adolescent Health Care Service program in schools.

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