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A Correlation Study between Spirituality and Risky Sexual Behavior in Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Risky sexual behavior among adolescents is a significant public health concern due to its potential long-term consequences, such as unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, and psychological disorders. The spirituality are believed to influence the likelihood of such behavior. This study aims to examine the relationship between spirituality with risky sexual behavior among adolescents.

Methods: This research employed a descriptive analytic design with a cross-sectional approach. The population consisted of 864 adolescents,, totaling 369 respondents selected using cluster sampling. Data were collected through SISRI-24 and Sexual Behavior questionnaire and analyzed using Spearman Rho correlation test via SPSS.

Results: The research results show that almost half of respondents are 17 years old (45,8%) and most of them are female (68,6%) and almost all of them are not dating (85,4). The findings revealed that the majority of adolescents had a middle level of spirituality (63,1%) and risky sexual behavior were categorized as low (94,6%). There was a very strong and significant relationship was found between spirituality and risky sexual behavior ($p = 0.001$; $r = -0.887$), indicating that higher levels of religiosity are associated with a lower tendency to engage in risky sexual behavior.

Conclusion: These results suggest that spirituality serves as a strong protective factor against risky sexual behaviour among adolescents, Religion-based interventions may serve as strategic approaches in efforts to prevent risky sexual behaviour in adolescents.

Keywords: Adolescents; Religious; Risky Sexual Behavior; Spirituality

INTRODUCTION

Teenagers often exhibit risky dating styles, characterized by engaging in age-inappropriate sexual behavior. Examples include premarital sex, kissing, and touching sensitive body parts. These sexual behaviors violate both social and religious norms (Fernandez et al., 2021). Sexual behaviors are closely interrelated. However, sexual intercourse in adolescents usually occurs during dating relationships because dating exposes adolescents to conditions that increase their sexual experiences (Mignault et al., 2024). There is a significant transition from childhood to adolescence during this period. Physical, cognitive, and psychosocial changes are among the early signs of adolescence. Adolescents begin to experience romantic feelings and engage in sexual experimentation. Several factors contribute to this, including peer interaction, media access, including viewing pornographic content, perception, knowledge, and the role of teachers. We often encounter adolescent phenomena such as drug abuse, premarital sex, and brawls (Dolev-cohen, 2024).

Sexually Globally, eight out of eight teenagers (13.2%) are actively involved in sexual behavior, and 52.4% of them have multiple partners (Belošević, 2023). In Indonesia, the average teenager starts dating at the age of 15-17 years, 1% of teenage girls and 8% of teenage boys are reported to have had premarital sex and 5% have engaged in risky sexual behavior such as kissing, masturbation and sexual intercourse (Hayee et al., 2020). Kissing with the opposite sex is done by 48% of teenage boys and 30% of teenage girls, touching or arousing sensitive body parts

of the opposite sex by 30% of teenage boys (Simak et al., 2019). The prevalence of the impact of risky sexual behavior, in 2023 there were 2.4 million cases of infectious diseases in the US (CDC, 2023) half of which were suffered by teenagers aged 15-24 years (CL Shannon & JD Klausner, 2019). Other consequences also arise, such as 10.5 million unwanted pregnancies, resulting in abortions and complications during pregnancy and childbirth worldwide (WHO, 2025). Meanwhile, 46.9% of 1,000 adolescent girls in Indonesia have given birth, the highest number compared to other ASEAN countries (Ningrum & Toyibah, 2021).

Behavior in adolescents is closely related to the biological and psychosocial changes that occur during adolescence. The desire for sexual fulfillment develops along with the maturation of sexual function. Although sexual urges are part of biological development, cultural values and social norms play a significant role in shaping how these behaviors are manifested. Forms of sexual behavior can include the desire to date, kiss, and even have sexual intercourse (Kemenkes, 2025). Many factors, including knowledge, spirituality, culture, mass media, individual experiences, education, and emotions, are associated with risky sexual behavior (Mollaei et al., 2023). One of the most important things to understand is adolescent sexual behavior, as it is during this period that children's sexual behavior transforms into adolescent sexual behavior. Adolescents and their families are greatly disadvantaged when sexual behavior is not understood during this period (Marbun & Stevanus, 2019).

The negative impacts of risky sexual behavior on adolescents include the

potential for, HIV/AIDS transmission, teenager pregnancy, unsafe abortion, and parental discovery. However, if adolescent sexual behavior is purely for pleasure, there are no consequences as long as the adolescent uses condoms or other contraceptives; the primary reason is luck (Jing et al., 2023).

Risky sexual behavior on adolescents requires a solution to overcome it. Behavioral problems are a reflection of the soul of each individual adolescent, so the solution provided is related to the adolescent's soul, namely in the form of moral guidance. Morals can be guided by direction from the values of essential truth, namely religion. A form of religious value guidance is spirituality. Spirituality is a form of behavior that arises from religious concepts believed by every individual or human being (Darmawan & Wardhaningsih, 2020). Spirituality is also one way to prevent and stop risky sexual behavior because spirituality can help someone achieve more meaningful behavior and life, give them the ability to handle problems, be flexible, and face suffering, and increase their likelihood of doing what they want (Budhiana et al., 2024). The results of research by Wardoyo et al., (2025) stated that spirituality can influence sexual behavior in adolescents. The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between spirituality and risky sexual behavior in adolescents at SMAN 3 Lamongan, Lamongan Regency.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative, descriptive-analytical design with a cross-sectional approach. The study was conducted Juni 2025. The independent

variable is spirituality level and the dependent variable is risky sexual behavior. The population was 864 students from second and third grade, selected using cluster random sampling with 369 sample. Data collection was conducted using the spiritual intelligence self-report inventory (SISRI-24) questionnaire from King (2008) consist of 20 items and Risky sexual behavior questionnaire from Muflih (2018) consist of 15 items. Both research instruments were declared valid and reliable based on previous test results, with Cronbach's alpha scale values of 0,921 and 0,89. Data analysis was performed using the Spearman Rho correlation test using SPSS version 22.0, with a significance level of $\alpha \leq 0.05$.

RESULTS

Based on data from 369 adolescents, the researchers obtained a general description of the adolescents, including age, gender, education level, and signs of puberty:

The majority of respondents were aged 16-17 (middle adolescence) and were mostly female (68,6%). The specific data in this study contains information on two main variables: Spirituality and risky sexual behavior among adolescents. Furthermore, the results of an analysis of the relationships between these variables are presented.

Based on Table 2, most part of adolescents (63,1%) have high levels of spirituality and almost all of adolescents (94,6%) have low levels of risky sexual behavior.

Based on Table 3, it can be seen that of the 369 adolescents with middle levels of religiosity (59,5%) were in the low-risk sexual behavior category.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Variable	n	(%)
Age		
15 Year	20	5.4
16 Year	162	43.9
17 Year	169	45.8
18 Year	16	4.3
19 Year	2	0.5
Total	369	100
Gender		
Female	253	68.6
Male	116	31.4
Total	369	100
Relationship Status		
Not Dating	315	85.4
Dating	54	14.6
Total	369	100

Table 2. The frequency distribution of research variable

Variable	n	(%)
Spirituality		
Low	19	5.1
Middle	233	63.1
High	117	31.7
Total	369	100
Risky sexual behaviour		
Low	349	94.6
Middle	19	5.1
High	1	0.3
Total	369	100

Meanwhile, only an adolescents with high level of risky sexual has middle level of spirituality.

The results of statistic test was any a correlation value (r) of -0.887 and a significance level (p) of 0.000 . A correlation value close to 1 indicates a very strong and negative relationship between spirituality and risky sexual behavior, while a p value less than 0.05 indicates a statistically significant

relationship. Thus, it can be concluded that the higher the level of religiosity of adolescents in Sedayulawas Village, the lower their tendency to engage in risky sexual behavior.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study showed that the majority of adolescents had middle levels of spirituality (63,1%), and high levels (31,7%). These results indicate that adolescents in this category have a spiritual connection that is sufficient, but not very deep or not yet become a major part of their life decision-making. The characteristics of adolescents at SMA N 3 Lamongan are dominated by females with an age range of middle adolescence (16-17 years). Differences in gender and developmental stages of adolescents can influence how they understand and experience spirituality. Female adolescents tend to be more open in expressing spirituality and middle adolescence tends to begin to form a spiritual identity.

Teenagers with moderate levels of spirituality typically have spiritual understanding and beliefs, and occasionally engage in religious practices or self-reflection. However, these spiritual values are not yet fully embedded in their attitudes and behavior. In this context, teenagers may understand that risky sexual behavior is contrary to religious teachings or moral norms, but do not yet have enough spiritual strength to control internal urges or pressure from the social environment (Lamia et al., 2024).

According to research by (Rudgard et al., 2023), moderate spirituality can provide partial protection against deviant behavior.

Table 3. Analysis of the relationship between religiosity with risky sexual behavior

Spirituality	Risky Sexual Behavior						Total	
	Low		Middle		High			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Low	111	30.2	6	1.6	0	0	117	31.7
Middle	219	59.5	12	3.3	1	0.3	233	63.1
High	18	4.9	1	0.3	0	0	19	5.2
Total	349	94.6	19	5.1	1	0.3	369	100
Uji Spearman rho	<i>p</i> :0.001		<i>r</i> :-0.887					

However, in certain situations, such as peer influence, social media, or lack of parental supervision, adolescents with moderate spirituality are still at risk of engaging in unhealthy sexual behavior. This is because spiritual values that have not yet fully become part of one's identity tend to be easily displaced by external factors. Furthermore, a study by Pinto et al., (2024) stated that weak spirituality is often insufficient to deter premarital sexual behavior, especially if it is not accompanied by strong self-control and positive environmental support. This suggests that even if adolescents possess spiritual values, without deep internalization and consistent spiritual practice, they remain vulnerable to risky sexual behavior.

A high level of spirituality plays a crucial role in shaping adolescents' moral resilience against negative environmental influences, including avoiding risky sexual behavior. Intensive efforts need to foster spirituality level, both through spiritual education in schools and spiritual development within the family environment. This guidance should not only focus on increasing the frequency of spiritual activities but also emphasize the internalization of spiritual values that are applicable in daily life, such as honesty, responsibility, and self-control. In this

way, adolescents can build a strong moral foundation in facing increasingly complex social challenges.

The Research also showed that the majority of respondents engaged in low-risk sexual behavior (94.6%). These findings are a positive indication that most adolescents are able to avoid sexual acts that could harm their physical, mental, and social health. Low-risk sexual behaviors include not engaging in premarital sex, not having multiple partners, and not engaging in unprotected sexual activity or under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Low sexual risk behavior in this category include light physical activities such as holding hands and hugging in public, which are generally considered forms of affection that do not lead to high-risk sexual behavior. These findings indicate that most adolescents are still able to control their sexual urges and have not yet engaged in higher-risk sexual behavior. This may be influenced by various factors, including cultural values, social norms, and religious teachings that are still highly upheld by the local community. Support from the family environment and the role of parents in providing supervision and moral guidance also contribute to strengthening adolescents' self-control, ensuring that their sexual behavior remains within safe limits.

This phenomenon aligns with Skinner's Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory, which explains that human behavior is a response to stimuli from the surrounding environment. In this regard, even though adolescents are exposed to various stimuli from mass media, peer influence, and dating culture, the majority of them are still able to provide positive responses by maintaining their behavior so as not to exceed the boundaries of applicable social and religious norms. Furthermore, according to Erikson, during the adolescent development stage (identity versus role confusion), individuals tend to explore social values and roles, including in terms of sexual behavior. However, the results of this study indicate that the majority of adolescents have received strong moral guidance, both from their family and social environment, so they are able to control their sexual behavior.

Andayani et al., (2022) stated that risky sexual behavior can begin with non-penetrative activities such as kissing or touching sensitive areas of the body, which in the long term can develop into more risky behavior if not accompanied by self-control. However, in this study, no tendency towards such behavior was found in the majority of respondents who were in the low category. In line with (Kim et al., 2024), who stated that a high level of religiosity can be a protective factor against risky sexual behavior, because religious values internalized by adolescents play a role in limiting the urge to engage in sexual behavior that violates norms.

The majority of adolescents show low-risk sexual behavior, and this positive trend must be maintained through ongoing sexual education, strengthening religious

values, and intensive supervision from parents and the surrounding community. These steps are expected to prevent a shift in adolescent behavior toward riskier sexual behavior in the future.

Based on the results of statistical tests, a correlation coefficient value of $r = -0.887$ with a significance of $p = 0.001$ was obtained, which indicates that there is a very strong and significant relationship between the level of religiosity and risky sexual behavior in adolescents. This relationship indicates that the high level of spirituality, the less likely they are to engage in risky sexual behavior. These findings suggest that spirituality is an important protective factor in preventing sexual behaviors that are detrimental to adolescents' physical and psychosocial health.

Spirituality related to moral values, personal beliefs, and a sense of meaning and purpose in life. Adolescents with a strong spirituality tend to have a strong value system, are able to control impulses, and consider the long-term impact of every action, including sexual behavior (Tamami & Mijanti, 2023). In this context, spirituality is not only a formal religious aspect but also encompasses internal dimensions such as self-reflection, connection with a higher power, and a sense of responsibility towards oneself.

Consistent with this research, a study by (Somefun, 2019) in Nigeria also showed that adolescents with high levels of spirituality were less likely to engage in premarital sex or other risky sexual activities. This is because spirituality can strengthen self-control, improve moral judgment, and foster greater self-awareness of the potential risks and

consequences of unhealthy sexual behavior.

Spirituality can also increase adolescent resilience against peer pressure. During adolescence, social pressures from the environment are very strong, especially when it comes to experimenting with risky behaviors. However, adolescents with a strong spiritual foundation tend to be better able to resist these pressures and adhere to their (Navari et al., 2024).

However, it's important to note that spirituality isn't the only factor influencing adolescent sexual behavior. Other factors, such as sexual education, parenting styles, access to health information, and socioeconomic conditions, also play a significant role (Hayee et al., 2024). Therefore, efforts to prevent risky sexual behavior need to be implemented holistically, not only spirituality but also taking all determinants.

Spirituality plays a crucial role in preventing risky sexual behavior in adolescents. Efforts to foster spirituality values from an early age through spiritual education, instilling a habit of worship, and providing support from a positive family and social environment are essential to ensure adolescents have strong moral fortitude to withstand the temptations of risky sexual behavior.

This study has limitations, particularly its cross-sectional design, which precludes direct causal analysis. Furthermore, the subjective nature of spirituality measurements can lead to interpretation bias. Further research involving interventions to increase spiritual intelligence is essential for preventing risky sexual behavior in adolescents.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it was found that there was a relationship between spirituality and risky sexual behavior in adolescents. Efforts to foster spiritual level from an early age through religious education, instilling a habit of worship, and providing support from a positive family and social environment are essential to ensure adolescents have strong moral for risky sexual behavior prevention.

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