

# Factors Associated with Premarital Sexual Behavior Among Adolescents in Lhokseumawe City

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**Abstract:** Free sexual behavior among teenagers is increasing in Lhokseumawe and triggering various social and health impacts. This study aims to analyze the factors associated with free sexual behavior quantitatively. This study uses an analytical design with a cross-sectional approach. A sample of 100 adolescents aged 15–19 years was selected using stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire that had been tested for validity and reliability. Analysis used chi-square tests and logistic regression. A significant relationship was found between knowledge ( $p = 0.002$ ), social media use ( $p = 0.000$ ), peer influence ( $p = 0.001$ ), parental role ( $p = 0.005$ ), and religiosity level ( $p = 0.000$ ) with promiscuous behavior. The most influential dominant factor is social media usage ( $OR=4.25$ ;  $CI\ 95\%: 2.1-8.6$ ). Free sexual behavior among adolescents is influenced by various factors, with social media being the dominant factor. Family, school, and religious-based interventions are needed.

**Keywords:** free sex; parents; religion; social media; teenagers.

## 1. Introduction

Free sexual behavior among teenagers is an increasingly concerning phenomenon in various regions of Indonesia [1], including the city of Lhokseumawe. This behavior includes sexual activities conducted outside of a legitimate marriage bond, such as kissing, touching sensitive areas, petting, and sexual intercourse, which pose risks of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. Based on data from the Aceh Provincial Health Office, Lhokseumawe ranks highest in cases of premarital sex among students, with a prevalence reaching 70% [2]. This fact is very concerning considering that Aceh is a region that formally implements Islamic law, and this indicates a gap between the upheld moral values and the actual behavior in society. Teenagers are a group of individuals who are undergoing significant physical, psychological, and social changes [3]. During this period, they tend to want to try new things, are easily influenced by their environment, and are searching for their identity.

This transitional period makes them vulnerable to various behavioral deviations, including risky sexual behavior. One of the main factors that shapes adolescent behavior is knowledge. Adolescents with low knowledge about reproductive health and the risks of promiscuity tend to be more permissive towards such practices [4]. The next factor is excessive and uncontrolled use of social media. Social media becomes a source of both information and disinformation for teenagers. Easy access to pornography and explicit sexual content can influence teenagers' perceptions and attitudes towards sexual activities. Research by Mesra et al (2017) states that there is a significant relationship between social media use and adolescent sexual behavior in Surakarta [5]. Exposure to sexual content on social media tends to normalize promiscuous behavior.

The influence of peers also becomes one of the dominant factors. Teenagers who associate with friends who have permissive dating styles tend to follow the same behavioral patterns. Peer groups are a source of information, social validation, and a means of identity exploration for adolescents. Mesra et al (2017) research shows that adolescents who have peers with active sexual behavior are 27 times more likely to engage in the same behavior

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compared to those who do not [5]. The role of parents in providing education, supervision, and open communication about sexuality is very important. Authoritative, open parents with a strong emotional bond with their children tend to be able to shield their children from negative environmental influences. Unfortunately, many parents feel taboo or awkward discussing sexuality with their children, leading the children to seek information from sources that may not be accurate [6], [7].

The level of religiosity among adolescents also contributes to their sexual behavior. Adolescents with high religiosity tend to have strong values and norms to avoid deviant behavior. Religious values instilled from an early age can serve as a moral fortress in decision-making, especially regarding sexual activities [8]. Although there have been many studies on adolescent sexual behavior, most still focus on qualitative approaches or emphasize only one factor. Not many studies have simultaneously analyzed various factors within a single quantitative research framework. Therefore, this study aims to quantitatively analyze the factors related to promiscuous behavior among adolescents in Lhokseumawe City, including knowledge, social media use, peer influence, parental role, and level of religiosity. With the results of this research, it is hoped that it can contribute to schools, the government, and families in formulating strategies for education, reproductive health promotion, and the prevention of risky sexual behavior among adolescents.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Adolescents**

In Indonesian, adolescence is often associated with puberty. Adolescence is a phase of development between childhood and adulthood, occurring between the ages of 12 to 21 years. Adolescence consists of early adolescence, ages 12-15 years, middle adolescence, ages 15-18 years, and late adolescence, ages 18-21 years. Adolescence is also referred to as a period of change, with changes in attitudes and behaviors during adolescence paralleling physical changes [9]. Physical development, including sexual organs, involves maturation and an increase in reproductive or sex hormone levels in both males and females, which will lead to overall changes in adolescent sexual behavior. In the psychological life of adolescents, the development of sexual organs has a strong influence on their interest in the opposite sex. The increase in adolescents' attention towards the opposite sex is greatly influenced by physical changes during the puberty period [10]. Teenage girls tend to exhibit body shapes that are attractive to teenage boys, and similarly, teenage boys develop more muscular bodies that are attractive to teenage girls. During adolescence, curiosity about sexual issues is very important in forming more mature relationships with the opposite sex. The maturation of sexual functions also leads to urges and desires for sexual gratification [11].

### **2.2. Premarital Sexual**

Free sexual behavior among teenagers is a complex issue influenced by various factors, both from within the teenagers themselves and from their surrounding environment. Internally, limited knowledge about reproductive health and the risks of casual sex often serves as a gateway. Teenagers who do not understand the consequences of their actions, such as unwanted pregnancies or sexually transmitted diseases, tend to take more risks [12]. Additionally, a lack of self-control and poor decision-making skills also play a significant role. Some studies also highlight psychological factors such as low self-esteem, depression, or the need for acceptance as drivers for teenagers to engage in this behavior. Feelings of loneliness or the desire to feel "mature" can also trigger sexual exploration. Equally crucial is the level of religiosity; teenagers with low levels of religiosity tend to have weaker moral and ethical boundaries, making them more susceptible to promiscuous behavior [13].

On the other hand, external factors or the social environment have a significant impact. The negative influence of peers is one of the main drivers, where pressure or invitations from friendship groups can prompt teenagers to try risky things [14], [15]. Uncontrolled use of social media also plays a significant role, as exposure to inappropriate content and easy access to interact with strangers can open opportunities for promiscuous behavior. Family conditions, such as a lack of effective communication between parents and children, loose supervision, or even family conflicts, often lead teenagers to seek comfort outside the home and potentially get caught up in free relationships [16]. Lastly, the accessibility of information

or environments that support promiscuous behavior, as well as permissive social norms in certain communities, also exacerbate this issue. Understanding the complex interaction between these internal and external factors is key to designing effective prevention programs.

### 3. Proposed Method

This research is an analytical quantitative study with a cross-sectional design, aimed at identifying the relationships between variables at a specific point in time [17]. The research population includes all adolescents aged 15-19 who reside in the city of Lhokseumawe. Sampling was conducted using the stratified random sampling technique with a total of 100 respondents to ensure proportional representation of subgroups within the population. Data collection was conducted through a structured questionnaire measuring five main variables: Knowledge about free sex, Intensity of social media use, Peer influence, Parental role, and Level of religiosity. All questionnaire items were measured using a Likert scale and have undergone validity ( $r > 0.3$ ) and reliability ( $\alpha > 0.7$ ) tests [18] ensuring the quality and consistency of the research instrument.

Data analysis was conducted in stages using the SPSS version 25 statistical software. The first stage is a bivariate analysis using the Chi-square test to explore the association between independent variables and the dependent variable. Next, to identify independent predictive factors for premarital sexual behavior among adolescents, a multivariate analysis with multiple logistic regression was conducted. The level of statistical significance for the entire analysis was set at  $p < 0.05$ , indicating that the findings are considered statistically significant if the probability of a Type I error is below 5%.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Characteristics of the Respondent

**Table 1.** Characteristics of the Respondent

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Age</b>		
15-17 years	55	55
18-19 years	45	45
Total	100	100
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	40	40
Female	60	60
Total	100	100

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents involved in this study, including the distribution of age and gender. Based on age categories, the majority of respondents are in the 15-17 year age range, representing 55% ( $n=55$ ) of the total sample. Meanwhile, respondents aged 18-19 make up 45% ( $n=45$ ). This proportion indicates that the research sample consists of adolescents with a relatively balanced age distribution between the early and late adolescent age groups, providing representation from various phases of adolescent development.

As for gender, the distribution of respondents shows a dominance of female participants, numbering 60 individuals (60% of the total sample). Conversely, male respondents are in the minority with 40 individuals (40%). This gender composition indicates that most of the data were collected from female respondents. These demographic characteristics are important to consider in the interpretation of further research results, especially in identifying potential differences or patterns of relationships between variables that may be influenced by the age and gender of the respondents.

## 4.2. Bivariate Analysis

**Table 2.** Bivariate Analysis Test Result

Variable	P value	Information
Low knowledge	0,002	Significant
High social media usage	0,000	Very significant
Negative peer influence	0,001	Significant
Weak parental role	0,005	Significant
Low religiosity	0,000	Very significant

Based on the results of the bivariate analysis presented in Table 2, all independent variables show a statistically significant relationship with free sex behavior among adolescents. Low knowledge about free sex has been proven to have a significant association with a p-value of 0.002. Similarly, high social media usage and low religiosity show a very significant association, each with a p-value of 0.000. Additionally, the negative influence of peers (with  $p=0.001$ ) and the weak role of parents (with  $p=0.005$ ) are also significantly associated with promiscuous behavior. These findings indicate that both internal factors (knowledge, religiosity) and external factors (social media, peers, parental role) play a crucial role in influencing teenagers' tendencies to engage in promiscuous behavior.

## 4.3. Multivariate Analysis

**Table 3.** Multivariate Analysis Test Result

Variable	OR	CI 95%	Information
High social media usage	4,25	2,1 – 8,6	Dominant factor
Low religiosity	3,12	1,5 – 6,2	Significant
Negative peer influence	2,87	1,3 – 5,9	Significant

Based on the results of the multivariate analysis presented in Table 3, three variables were found to be significantly associated with risky sexual behavior among adolescents after controlling for other variables. High social media usage emerged as a dominant factor, increasing the likelihood of adolescents engaging in risky sexual behavior by 4.25 times ( $OR = 4.25$ ) with a 95% confidence interval between 2.1 and 8.6. Additionally, low religiosity also significantly increased the risk, with a likelihood of 3.12 times ( $OR = 3.12$ ) and a 95% CI of 1.5 to 6.2. Lastly, negative peer influence also significantly contributed, increasing the risk by 2.87 times ( $OR = 2.87$ ) with a 95% CI between 1.3 and 5.9. These findings confirm that social media usage, level of religiosity, and peer influence are important predictors of risky sexual behavior among adolescents.

## 4.4. Discussion

The analysis results show that high social media usage is a dominant factor influencing promiscuous behavior among teenagers. An Odds Ratio (OR) of 4.25 with a 95% Confidence Interval (CI) of 2.1–8.6 indicates that teenagers who actively use social media are more than four times likely to engage in risky sexual behavior. Social media has become a highly influential medium because it contains various easily accessible sexual content and can shape adolescents' perceptions and attitudes towards sexuality. This is in line with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which states that individuals learn through observing their environment. Low religiosity also significantly contributes to the risk of promiscuous sexual behavior ( $OR = 3.12$ ). Religiosity functions as an internal control that guides moral decision-making. Adolescents with low levels of religiosity tend to lack strong guidelines in controlling their sexual urges and are more easily influenced by their environment.

The negative influence of peers with an OR of 2.87 indicates that the social environment of peers significantly affects adolescents' decision-making. Teenagers who associate with friends permissive towards casual sex tend to follow that pattern, either because they want to be accepted in the group or due to social pressure. Factors such as knowledge and parental roles, although significant in bivariate analysis, did not enter the final logistic regression model. This indicates that its influence is relatively smaller compared to other dominant variables when controlled simultaneously. The implications of these findings indicate that educational efforts should be accompanied by the reinforcement of religious

values, monitoring of social media usage, and the creation of a healthy social environment. Preventing promiscuous behavior requires an integrative and cross-sectoral approach.

## 5. Conclusions

This research concludes that there is a significant relationship between low knowledge, high social media usage, negative peer influence, weak parental role, and low religiosity with promiscuous behavior. The dominant factors with the most influence are social media usage, religiosity, and peer influence. Preventive efforts should be focused on digital education, strengthening religious values, and developing healthy peer groups.

Suggestions for schools and community health centers to conduct digital literacy education and counseling on the dangers of sexual content on social media, families are encouraged to strengthen open communication with teenagers regarding reproductive health, and religious organizations and teenagers need to be empowered to build communities that instill moral and spiritual values.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest

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