



The Relationship between Social Media Use and Risky Sexual Behavior Among Adolescents at Senior High School

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ABSTRACT

Background: Adolescence is a period of rapid change and development, marked by the maturation of physiological functions and the emergence of primary and secondary sexual characteristics. Without adequate knowledge and education on reproductive health, these developments may lead to detrimental behaviors, such as risky sexual behavior. **Purpose:** This study aims to analyze the relationship between social media use and risky sexual behavior among adolescents at selected Senior High School in Jember Regency. **Methods:** This research employs a quantitative method with a descriptive-analytical design using a cross-sectional approach. The data collection was conducted through a total sampling method, involving 123 students as respondents. Data were gathered using a questionnaire and analyzed using the Kendall's Tau B test. **Results:** The findings reveal that 78% of respondents have a low level of social media use, and 54.4% exhibit less active risky sexual behavior. Statistical analysis showed a significant relationship, with a p-value of 0.000 and a correlation coefficient of 0.587, indicating a strong positive correlation. **Conclusions:** This research shows that higher social media usage is associated with increased risky sexual behavior among adolescents. The study highlights the importance of providing adolescents with comprehensive knowledge and education on reproductive health to help them distinguish positive behaviors from negative influences, thereby reducing the likelihood of engaging in risky sexual behavior. Additionally, the role of parents and teachers in educating and guiding adolescents from an early age is important, as their behavior is shaped by the approach and supervision they receive.

KEYWORDS

Adolescence, Sexual behavior, Social media

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1. BACKGROUND

Adolescence is a stage of life that plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's personality. During this period, adolescents experience rapid growth and development,

both physically, psychologically, and socially (Milenkova & Nakova, 2023; Amaylia et al., 2020). One significant phase of adolescent development is middle adolescence. At this stage, adolescents are searching for and

exploring their identity, heavily relying on their peers, feeling confused due to the lack of beneficial activities, and possessing a high level of curiosity about things they do not yet understand (Acheson & Papadima, 2023; Aprilia et al., 2020). Adolescents also change physiological functions, including the maturation of reproductive organs and the development of primary and secondary sexual characteristics. Primary sexual characteristics include the development of reproductive organs, which are marked by the production of estrogen and progesterone hormones in females and testosterone in males. Meanwhile, secondary sexual characteristics involve physical changes associated with sexual attractiveness. Sexual maturity leads adolescents to develop an interest in the opposite sex and increases their curiosity about sexuality (Kågesten & van Reeuwijk, 2021). Sexual urges drive this curiosity. As individuals enter puberty, sexual urges emerge along with the functioning of reproductive organs and the activation of sex hormones, which trigger sexual desires in adolescents (Granata et al., 2022; Hayati et al., 2021). High sexual curiosity in adolescents can lead to unwanted sexual behaviors (Hedge et al., 2022).

The high curiosity about sexuality encourages adolescents to seek information on the subject. Social media is one of the most popular sources of information among adolescents today. Adolescent development is closely tied to the use of social media as a product of technological advancements in information, communication, and knowledge that continue to evolve rapidly. Social media provides various features that users can utilize (Firth et al., 2024; Purwanto et al., 2023). In middle adolescence, adolescents use social media platforms to satisfy their curiosity about various topics and because these platforms are popular among their peers. Adolescents perceive spending more time on social media makes them appear cool and trendy. However, as social media users, adolescents cannot often filter out beneficial activities. Consequently, unhealthy use of social media can negatively impact them (Aprilia et al., 2020; Throuvala et al., 2021).

According to a survey by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), the number of internet users in Indonesia during 2022-2023 reached 215.63 million people. This represents a 2.67% increase, or about 5.6 million users, compared to the previous period, which

recorded 210.03 million users. This figure accounts for 78.19% of Indonesia's population of 275.77 million. Compared to the previous survey, internet penetration in Indonesia increased by 1.17%, from 77.02% in 2021-2022 to 78.19% in 2023. Most internet usage in Indonesia, 55%, comes from Java Island (Kandau & Munawaroh, 2023). According to the APJII survey, the most accessed content type is social media, at 97.4%. The largest group of users is adolescents with a high school education level, accounting for 64.7%. Adolescents use social media primarily to seek information about sexual education, approximately 58.81% (Fadillah & Widayati, 2018). Additionally, the latest data from We Are Social in 2024 shows that the most popular social media platforms among adolescents are WhatsApp (90.9%), Instagram (85.3%), followed by Facebook (81.6%), TikTok (73.5%), Telegram (61.3%), and Twitter (57.5%) (Annur, 2024).

The increase in internet usage should be approached wisely, as the development of technology and information through social media has both positive and negative impacts on adolescents. Positive impacts include facilitating communication and information exchange, while negative impacts involve the misuse of information

systems to fulfill sexual needs (Jiao et al., 2021). Through social media, adolescents can express themselves as they wish. However, this freedom poses challenges among adolescents today (Asmawati et al., 2022; West et al., 2025). The ease of accessing and sharing information means there are no restrictions on the content that can be viewed, including harmful content like pornography, which can influence how adolescents think, feel, and behave regarding sexuality (Aulia & Fitriyana, 2021). Despite government-imposed blocks, many social media platforms remain accessible for viewing pornographic content. Some applications can even bypass restrictions implemented by the Indonesian government (Purwanto et al., 2023).

Pornographic content can encourage adolescents to imitate it in real life. Adolescents with high curiosity tend to accept all information from social media without considering whether it is positive or negative. Many even decide to try things they find on social media. This is evidenced by adolescents in relationships admitting to engaging in various sexual activities, from light physical contact such as holding hands and hugging to more intimate activities such as kissing, making out, and even sexual intercourse with their partners (Purwanto et

al., 2023). Moreover, adolescents often utilize information about sexuality and reproductive health inappropriately, leading to inaccurate and incorrect information. Consequently, misinformation from social media can make it easier for adolescents to act on their sexual desires, increasing their risk of engaging in premarital sexual behavior (Alfarista & Rahmawati, 2018).

A preliminary study conducted through interviews with the principal of Selected Senior High School in Jember Regency revealed that internet use at the school is quite advanced, evidenced by the availability of Wi-Fi networks and a computer lab for student use during exams. Additionally, several cases have occurred at the school, including smoking, skipping classes, and students in relationships engaging in kissing, hugging, and holding hands on campus. There have also been cases of female students dropping out due to pregnancy. A preliminary study at the Kalisat Family Planning Counseling Center reported 31 wives under the age of 20 and several mothers under the age of 20. These findings indicate that adolescents are at risk of engaging in premarital sexual behavior. Therefore, during adolescence, it is crucial to provide proper attention to reproductive health issues. One step that can be taken to

prevent deviant sexual behavior is to provide education on reproductive health to adolescents. The role of parents and teachers in educating and guiding adolescents from an early age is vital, as adolescent behavior is influenced by the approach and supervision they receive.

2. METHODS

The research design used in this study is descriptive-analytical research with a cross-sectional approach. The population in this study consisted of active students from grades X, XI, and XII at senior high school X Jember Regency from November 2023 to January 2025. The sample size was determined in this study using a total sampling technique, where the entire population of 123 students was included as the sample.

The research instruments included two sections: the first section focused on respondent characteristics such as age, gender, class, living arrangements, and parental marital status, while the second section assessed social media usage and risky sexual behavior. The social media usage questionnaire consisted of 20 items using a Likert scale, with validity and reliability tests showing high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.835). The risky sexual

behavior questionnaire, adapted from Sarwono (2004), included 10 items with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.895, indicating strong reliability.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 25.0 for Windows software. Statistical tests included univariate analysis for descriptive statistics, bivariate analysis using Kendall’s Tau-B to examine the relationship between social media usage and risky sexual behavior, and interpretation at a 95% confidence level ($p < 0.05$).

This research has received ethical approval from the Ethics Commission of the Faculty of Nursing, University of Jember, approval number 322/UN25.1.14/KEPK/2024 dated November 2024.

3. RESULTS

Respondent Characteristics

The characteristics of respondents in this study include age, gender, grade level, living arrangements, and parents' marital status. The distribution of respondent characteristics is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics at Selected Senior High School in Jember Regency in Jember Regency (n=123)

Respondent Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Social Media Usage p (r)	Risky Sexual Behavior p (r)
Age				
M (SD)	17.5	1.080	0,002 (a)	0,0001 (a)
Gender			0,000	0,0001
Male	63	51,2	(-0,458) (b)	(-0,431) (b)
Female	60	48,8		
Grade Level				
X (Tenth Grade)	42	34,1	0,019 (a)	0,0001 (a)
XI (Eleventh Grade)	37	30,1		
XII (Twelfth Grade)	44	35,8		
Living with				
With both parents	83	67,5		
With one parent	8	6,5	0,520	0,333
With grandparents	13	10,6	(0,054) (b)	(0,078) (b)
With siblings	5	4,0		
With parents and grandparents	14	11,4		
Parent's Marital Status				
Married	95	77,2	0,360	0,261
Divorce	21	17,1	(0,087) (b)	(0,097) (b)
Widowed	7	5,7		

Social Media Usage Among Adolescents at Selected Senior High School

Social media usage related to pornography access among adolescents at selected Senior High School in Jember

Regency was evaluated using categorical distribution. This variable was divided into three categories: low (11-25), medium (26-40), and high (41-55). The results of this evaluation are shown in Figure 1.

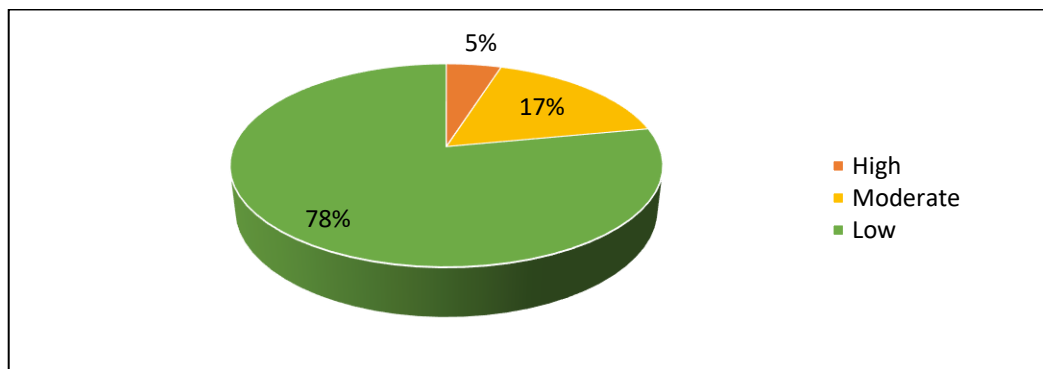


Figure 1. Distribution of Social Media Usage Categories Related to Pornographic Content at Selected Senior High School in Jember Regency (n=123)

Table 2. Distribution of Social Media Usage Indicators Among Adolescents at Selected Senior High School in Jember Regency (n=123)

Social Media Usage Indicators	TP		JR		KD		SR		SL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Social Media Types										
Facebook	25	21,1	35	28,5	35	28,5	16	13,0	11	8,9
Twitter	103	83,7	13	10,6	7	5,7	0	0	0	0
Instagram	10	8,1	14	11,4	33	26,8	27	22,0	39	31,7
Devices for Accessing										
Mobile Phone	0	0	9	7,3	5	4,1	21	17,1	88	71,5
Laptop	97	78,9	9	7,3	10	8,1	5	4,1	2	1,6
Purpose for Accessing										
Add Information	17	13,8	5	4,1	38	30,9	24	19,5	39	31,7
Be Socially Active	36	29,3	33	26,8	33	26,8	5	4,1	16	13,0
Make Friends	10	8,1	15	12,2	36	29,3	36	29,3	26	21,1
View Pornographic Content	74	60,2	29	23,6	12	9,8	5	4,1	3	2,4
Access to Pornographic Content										
View Pornographic Photos	65	52,8	23	18,7	19	15,4	13	10,6	3	2,4
Watch Pornographic Videos	72	58,5	27	22,0	18	14,6	6	4,9	0	0
Watch Pornographic Content in Facebook	76	61,8	27	22,0	11	8,9	5	4,1	4	3,3
Pornographic Content in Twitter	113	91,9	4	4,3	4	3,3	2	1,6	0	0
Pornographic Content in Instagram	86	69,9	26	21,1	6	4,9	4	3,3	1	0,8
Uploading Pornographic Content	115	93,5	4	3,3	2	1,6	1	0,8	1	0,8
Upload Intimate Content	47	38,2	29	23,6	32	26,0	9	7,3	6	4,9
Search for Sexual Information	62	50,4	23	18,7	30	24,4	3	2,4	5	4,1
Learn About Sexuality	60	48,8	24	19,5	28	22,8	9	7,3	2	1,6
Ignore Pornographic Content	19	15,4	12	9,8	24	19,5	29	23,6	39	31,7
Access for Sexual Satisfaction	100	81,3	13	10,6	7	5,7	2	1,6	1	0,8

Risky Sexual Behavior Among Adolescents

Risky sexual behavior among adolescents at Selected Senior High School in Jember Regency was evaluated using

categorical distribution. The categories were: less active (<17), moderately active (17-34), and active (35-40). The results are shown in Figure 2.

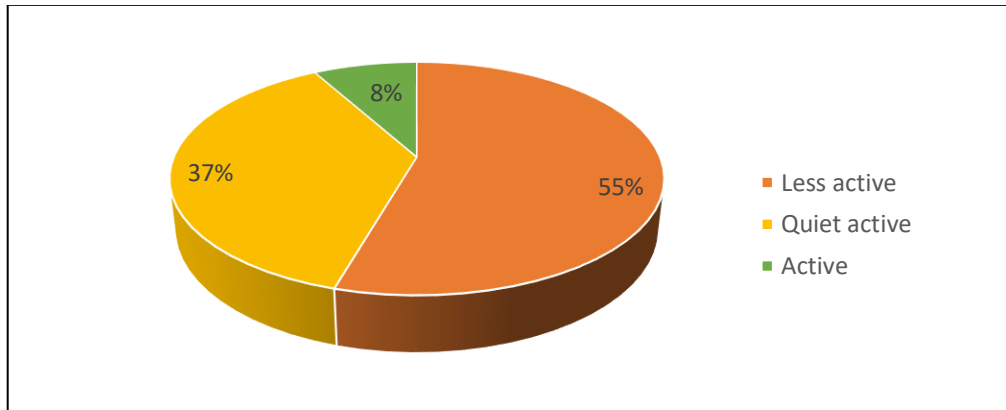


Figure 2. Distribution of Risky Sexual Behavior Categories Among Adolescents at Selected Senior High School in Jember Regency (n=123)

Most adolescents were categorized as less active (54.5%), followed by moderately active (17.1%) and active (4.9%).

Relationship Between Social Media Usage and Risky Sexual Behavior

The relationship between social media usage and risky sexual behavior was analyzed using Kendall’s tau B statistical test in Table 4.

Table 3. Cross-tabulation of Social Media Usage and Risky Sexual Behavior Among Adolescents at Selected Senior High School in Jember Regency (n=123)

Social Media Usage	Risky Sexual Behavior			Total
	Less Active	Moderately Active	Active	
Low Usage	66 (53.7%)	29 (23.6%)	1 (0.8%)	96 (78%)
Medium Usage	1 (0.8%)	15 (12.2%)	5 (4.1%)	21 (17.1%)
High Usage	0 (0%)	2 (1.6%)	4 (3.3%)	6 (4.9%)
Total	67 (54.5%)	46 (37.4%)	10 (8.1%)	123 (100%)

Table 4. Relationship Between Social Media Usage and Risky Sexual Behavior among Adolescents at Selected Senior High School in Jember Regency

Variable	p	r	The direction of the relationship
Social Media Usage and Risky Sexual Behavior	0.000	0.587	Positive

The statistical analysis, shown in Table 4, reveals a significant positive correlation

between social media usage and risky sexual behavior. The p-value is 0.000 (p<0.05), with

a correlation coefficient of 0.587, indicating a moderate to strong positive relationship. The findings suggest that higher social media usage is associated with an increase in risky sexual behaviors among adolescents at Selected Senior High School in Jember Regency.

4. DISCUSSION

Social Media Usage Among Adolescents

The study results indicate a significant difference in social media usage among adolescents at Selected Senior High School in Jember Regency. Over half of the respondents had a low level of exposure to pornographic content on social media, accounting for 78%. This aligns with the findings by Padut et al. (2021), which revealed that 68.9% of respondents were not exposed to pornographic content. Social media can be a powerful tool for self-expression and identity-building among adolescents (Regita et al., 2024). Low exposure to pornographic content suggests that adolescents can distinguish between beneficial and harmful information for their development. Their emotional stability enables them to critically evaluate and process information wisely, avoiding harmful influences (Lubis et al., 2023). The Ministry of Communication and Informatics

has also blocked numerous negative content sites, including 898,108 pornographic content items, the most dominant among other negative content types. Despite these efforts, the spread of pornographic content in Indonesia remains a challenge (Throuvala et al., 2021). Another contributing factor to the low access to pornographic content is the perception of it being taboo (Hanifah et al., 2024).

Instagram was the most popular social media platform among adolescents, consistent with findings by Mekonen et al. (2024), where 47.8% of adolescents predominantly used Instagram. Its popularity stems from its engaging visual and audiovisual features, which serve as an appealing learning medium. Adolescents use Instagram to expand their knowledge and acquire relevant information that can be applied to daily life (Fujiawati & Raharja, 2021). Furthermore, 71.5% of adolescents accessed social media via smartphones. This aligns with other study, which found that 52% of social media access occurs through mobile phones. Smartphones are more portable and practical than laptops or tablets, making them a preferred choice for accessing social media to gather information, read news, or post photos (Andersson, 2022).

The study revealed that adolescents at Selected Senior High School in Jember Regency primarily used social media to gain information (31.7%), while 31.7% ignored pornographic content, and 81.3% did not view it as a means of sexual gratification. This is consistent with findings by Mekonen et al. (2024), which reported that social media is used for entertainment (91.8%), accessing current information (72%), communicating with friends (63.2%), staying connected with family (42.3%), meeting new people (27.5%), and posting photos or videos (24.7%). Adolescents' ability to disregard pornographic content is influenced by self-awareness, which helps them maintain a positive self-perception (Bratu & Cioca, 2024).

Risky Sexual Behavior Among Adolescents

The study indicates a significant difference in risky sexual behavior among adolescents at Selected Senior High School in Jember Regency. Most adolescents exhibited low engagement in risky sexual behaviors, with 54.5% demonstrating minimal activity. This finding is consistent with Purwanto (2023), who reported that 83.5% of adolescents avoided risky sexual behaviors. Adolescents' low engagement in risky behaviors is linked to their awareness

of the negative impacts of pornography (Purwanto et al., 2023).

The most common risky sexual behavior among adolescents was hugging (touching), with 4.9% always, 8.9% often, 26% sometimes, and 29.3% rarely engaging in it, and kissing ranked second, with 3.3% always, 5.7% often, 13% sometimes, and 25.2% rarely participating. These findings align with Alwi (2023), who noted that touching is the most prevalent behavior. While these behaviors are perceived as harmless expressions of affection, they may lead to more serious risky behaviors due to the stimulation and comfort they provide (Alwi, 2023).

Risky sexual behavior among adolescents with moderate or high activity levels is often due to a lack of sexual education, peer influence, and social media exposure (Mulya & Kosassy, 2024). Hormonal changes drive this behavior during puberty, curiosity, and the desire to explore new experiences (Padut et al., 2021).

Relationship Between Social Media Usage and Risky Sexual Behavior

The study highlights a relationship between social media usage and risky sexual behavior among adolescents at Selected Senior High School in Jember Regency. Adolescents with higher social media usage

were 2.752 times more likely to exhibit risky sexual behavior ($p=0.03$; OR: 2.752) (Nuraeni et al., 2021). Social media influences adolescents' affective variables, potentially leading to negative self-comparisons (Chen & Xiao, 2022). However, it can also positively impact self-motivation and personal growth (Bonsaksen et al., 2024).

Adolescents with high social media usage demonstrated active risky sexual behavior in 3.3% of cases. This may be attributed to sensation-seeking tendencies and the ease of accessing sexual information online (Chan & Wu-Ouyang, 2023). Sexting, for instance, is a precursor to offline sexual activity. Parents and schools are crucial in mitigating these risks by fostering open communication, setting boundaries, and creating a safe online environment.

5. CONCLUSION

This research shows that higher social media usage is associated with increased risky sexual behavior among adolescents. The study highlights the importance of providing adolescents with comprehensive knowledge and education on reproductive health to help them distinguish positive behaviors from negative influences, thereby reducing the likelihood of engaging in risky sexual behavior. Additionally, the role of

parents and teachers in educating and guiding adolescents from an early age is important, as their behavior is shaped by the approach and supervision they receive. In efforts to prevent risky sexual behaviors in adolescents, nurses can play a crucial role by providing education and counseling that emphasize the importance of understanding the risks associated with sexual behavior.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Substantial contributions to conception, data collection: Nenchy Yetika Setya Ningrum, Hanny Rasni, and Fahrudin Kurdi. Analysis, writing, and manuscript revisions: Yetika Setya Ningrum and Hanny Rasni.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest in this research.

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DATA AVAILABILITY

The data supporting this study's findings are available upon request from the corresponding author.

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