

Adolescent Reproductive Health Education: Midwives' Contribution to the Prevention of Unintended Pregnancy

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ABSTRACT

Unplanned pregnancy among adolescents is a complex issue influenced by limited access to reproductive health education and adolescent-friendly contraceptive services. This phenomenon has multidimensional impacts, including increased risk of health complications, school dropout, and social stigma that hinders adolescent well-being. The role of midwives is crucial in bridging the gap in information and access to reproductive health services. Evidence-based reproductive health education has been shown to be effective in improving adolescents' understanding of their sexual and reproductive rights. However, the implementation of this program still faces challenges in the form of cultural resistance, lack of training for health workers, and social stigma that hinders open discussion. This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature review method to analyze the role of midwives in preventing adolescent pregnancy. The results of the study show that cross-sector collaboration and the use of digital technology can increase the effectiveness of reproductive health education. However, challenges such as misinformation and weak digital regulations must be addressed by strengthening digital literacy and content monitoring. With the right strategy, midwives can play a more optimal role in providing inclusive and evidence-based services, so that adolescents are able to make responsible decisions regarding their reproductive health.

Keywords: Adolescent Reproductive Health; Midwives' Role; Unintended Pregnancy Prevention

INTRODUCTION

Unplanned pregnancy in adolescents is a complex phenomenon related to various structural, social, and individual factors. According to the WHO report (2022), around 12 million adolescent girls aged 15–19 years give birth each year, with the majority of cases occurring in low- and middle-income countries. The main factors that trigger high rates of adolescent pregnancy are limited access to comprehensive reproductive health education and affordable, youth-friendly contraceptive services (Taufikurrahman et al., 2023). In addition, social and cultural norms that limit open discussion about sexuality also worsen the

situation, causing adolescents to have inadequate understanding of the risks of early pregnancy and how to prevent it.

The implications of teenage pregnancy not only affect the individual concerned but also the wider community. A study conducted by Siagian et al (2023) showed that pregnancy at a young age increases the risk of obstetric complications, such as preeclampsia and premature birth, which can lead to maternal and infant death. From a social and economic perspective, teenagers who experience unplanned pregnancies tend to drop out of school, have limited access to job opportunities, and have social stigma that can have a negative impact on their psychological well-being. Thus, an intervention approach based on education, policies that support adolescent reproductive health, and the active role of health workers, including midwives, are crucial in overcoming this problem.

Comprehensive reproductive health education is not only limited to providing information on reproductive anatomy and physiology, but also includes psychosocial aspects that play a role in adolescent decision-making regarding sexuality. According to Fridha & Haryanti (2020), evidence-based sexual education programs can delay the age of first sexual intercourse, increase the use of contraception, and reduce the rate of teenage pregnancy. However, in many countries, the implementation of reproductive health education still encounters various obstacles, such as cultural resistance, lack of training for educators, and unsupportive policies. Without a systematic and inclusive approach, sexual education tends to be merely the delivery of information without providing a deep understanding of adolescent sexual and reproductive rights.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of reproductive health education is highly dependent on the delivery method and the involvement of various parties, including schools, families, and health workers. Mancone et al (2024) emphasized that interactive-based reproductive health education, such as group discussions, decision-making simulations, and integration of digital technology, is more effective in improving adolescents' understanding and skills in managing their reproductive health risks. Unfortunately, many programs still use a fear-based approach, such as emphasizing the negative impacts of sexuality without equipping adolescents with the skills needed to realistically avoid risks. Therefore, strengthening reproductive health education must be carried out comprehensively by ensuring that adolescents have access to accurate information, supportive health services, and a social environment that allows them to make responsible decisions.

As health workers who are close to the community, midwives play a central role in bridging the gap in access to reproductive health information and services for adolescents. According to Gu et al (2020), midwives who are trained in empathy-based communication and evidence-based approaches are able to increase adolescent awareness of their sexual and reproductive rights. Unfortunately, in many countries, the limited number of midwives, the lack of specific training in dealing with adolescent issues, and the social stigma that still

hinders discussions about reproductive health are major obstacles. Therefore, policies are needed that support strengthening the capacity of midwives in providing education that is not only informative but also empowers adolescents in making responsible decisions regarding their reproductive health.

In addition to their role in education, midwives also play a role in providing direct access to safe and youth-friendly reproductive health services. A study conducted by Nurhanifah et al (2023) emphasized that midwives can be facilitators in connecting adolescents with contraceptive services, reproductive health checks, and psychosocial counseling to prevent unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. However, the effectiveness of these services depends on an inclusive and non-judgmental approach, given that many adolescents are reluctant to seek help for fear of social stigma. Therefore, strengthening the role of midwives in the health system must be accompanied by policy reforms that support a more friendly, inclusive, and human rights-based reproductive health service environment.

Cross-sector collaboration in adolescent reproductive health education is the main key to reducing the number of unplanned pregnancies. According to UNFPA (2023), a multisectoral approach involving health workers, educators, community organizations, and families has proven to be more effective in increasing awareness and changing adolescent behavior compared to interventions carried out by only one party. Schools, for example, can act as education centers by integrating a comprehensive reproductive health curriculum, while midwives and health workers are responsible for providing evidence-based services and counseling. Unfortunately, in many countries, the lack of coordination between sectors is still a major obstacle, so that existing programs tend to run partially without having a significant impact on reducing adolescent pregnancy rates.

In addition to inter-sectoral coordination, the use of digital technology in reproductive health education is an innovative strategy that is increasingly relevant in the digital era. Asti et al (2025) reported that online platforms, reproductive health applications, and social media can be effective tools in disseminating accurate and easily accessible information to adolescents. Through this approach, adolescents can obtain interactive, anonymous, and needs-based education, thereby reducing social barriers that have so far hindered access to reproductive health information. However, the main challenge in implementing this digital strategy is the dissemination of information that has not been standardized, as well as the potential for misuse of digital media to spread false or misleading information. Therefore, clear regulations and the involvement of health workers in developing and verifying digital content are essential to ensure that adolescents receive accurate and reliable information.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method to analyze the role of midwives in adolescent reproductive health education to prevent unplanned pregnancies. Literature studies were chosen because they

allow for in-depth exploration of various academic sources, health policies, and relevant international organization reports. The data in this study came from secondary sources, including accredited scientific journals that discuss reproductive health education, the role of midwives, and strategies for preventing adolescent pregnancy. In addition, reports from international organizations such as WHO, UNFPA, UNESCO, and the Guttmacher Institute are the main references in understanding policy trends and interventions that have been implemented. Academic books and national policy documents are also used as study materials to see how government regulations support adolescent reproductive health.

Data collection techniques were carried out through systematic searches in various scientific databases such as PubMed, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, and DOAJ using relevant keywords, such as "adolescent reproductive health education," "midwives' role in reproductive health," "unintended pregnancy prevention," and "sexual health policies." The collected data were then analyzed using the content analysis method with several stages, namely data coding to identify the main themes, data reduction to filter the most relevant information, and thematic interpretation to develop a deeper understanding of the role of midwives in reproductive health education. To ensure the validity and credibility of the study, source triangulation was carried out by comparing various literatures from reputable journals, international organization reports, and national policies related to adolescent reproductive health. In addition, a peer debriefing approach was applied by involving academics and health practitioners to obtain a more objective perspective. With this method, the study is expected to provide a strong academic contribution in understanding the effectiveness of the role of midwives in reducing the number of unplanned pregnancies among adolescents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Midwives in Adolescent Reproductive Health Education

1. Reproductive Health Education as an Effort to Prevent Teenage Pregnancy

The results of reproductive health education show that increasing adolescent understanding of reproductive health contributes to a decrease in the number of unplanned pregnancies. A study conducted by Hamidah & Rizal (2022) confirmed that adolescents who receive reproductive health education from health workers are better able to make responsible decisions in their sexual lives compared to those who only get information from peers or social media. This is reinforced by research by Mark & Wu (2022) which states that science-based sexual education provided from an early age contributes to delayed sexual initiation, increased use of contraception, and a significant decrease in adolescent pregnancy rates. However, the main challenge in implementing this education is

the continued cultural resistance that considers discussions about reproductive health as taboo.

A good understanding of the reproductive cycle is one of the main factors in pregnancy prevention efforts. According to research by Chairunnisa & Gandasari (2023), awareness of the fertile period and the risk of pregnancy can increase wiser decision-making in sexual behavior. Unfortunately, many teenagers still have a misconception about the reproductive cycle, increasing the potential for risky sexual relations. Limited access to accurate information makes teenagers vulnerable to myths about reproductive health, such as the assumption that first-time sexual intercourse cannot result in pregnancy or that washing the reproductive organs after intercourse can prevent fertilization. This error shows the need for more systematic reproductive health education based on scientific evidence.

In addition, reproductive health education also includes information about contraception which plays an important role in preventing teenage pregnancy. A study by Priskatindea & Ronoatmodjo (2021) showed that teenagers who have access to contraceptive services are more likely to use contraceptives correctly and consistently. However, the main obstacles in implementing this strategy are social stigma and cultural norms that hinder adolescents' access to contraceptive services. According to WHO (2021), although the use of contraception can reduce the number of teenage pregnancies by up to 75%, most teenagers are still reluctant to use contraception due to shame, lack of parental support, and minimal information available in formal educational environments.

Furthermore, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) is also an important part of reproductive health education. A study by Widman et al. (2018) found that education that emphasizes aspects of sexual health comprehensively can increase adolescent awareness in using protection such as condoms during sexual intercourse. However, there are still many reproductive health education programs that tend to focus on moralistic aspects and abstinence rather than a harm reduction-based approach. In fact, research by Soraya et al (2025) shows that programs that only emphasize abstinence without providing information on the use of contraception tend to fail to reduce teenage pregnancy rates and STD infections.

For reproductive health education to be effective, the communication strategy used must be interactive and empathy-based. This approach allows adolescents to feel comfortable seeking information without shame or fear. Research by Nisrin et al (2024) highlights the importance of open and needs-based communication for adolescents in increasing the effectiveness of reproductive health education. In addition, support from the social environment, especially family and school, plays a major role in shaping adolescent attitudes towards reproductive health. A study by Davina et al (2024) showed that parental involvement in their children's sexual education can improve understanding and better decision-making in adolescent sexual life.

However, there are still challenges in implementing reproductive health education. Many cultures consider discussions about sexuality as taboo, making

it difficult for adolescents to obtain accurate information. In addition, access to reproductive health services is still limited, especially in rural areas or communities with minimal resources. The influence of media and peers is also a factor that cannot be ignored, because information obtained from these sources is often inaccurate and can encourage risky sexual behavior. Therefore, a holistic approach is needed that involves various parties, including families, schools, health workers, and policy makers, to ensure comprehensive and effective reproductive health education in preventing teenage pregnancy. The combination of a science-based approach, inclusive communication, and strong social support are the main keys to creating a generation of adolescents who are more aware and responsible for their reproductive health.

2. Challenges and Strategies for Midwives in Increasing Access to Adolescent Reproductive Health Services

Midwives have a strategic role in providing reproductive health education and services for adolescents, but the implementation of this role still faces various challenges. One of the main obstacles is the limited training and competence of midwives in dealing with adolescents. A study by Juniar et al (2024) highlighted that many health workers, including midwives, lack specific training in providing services oriented to the psychosocial needs of adolescents. As a result, communication between midwives and adolescents is often ineffective, leading to low levels of adolescent trust in reproductive health services. This is in line with the findings in Uberty's (2022) study which showed that adolescents are more likely to avoid reproductive health services that are considered unresponsive to their needs.

In addition to the competence aspect, social and cultural stigma are significant inhibiting factors in the accessibility of reproductive health services for adolescents. WHO research (2023) confirms that in many developing countries, social norms still consider discussing reproductive health as taboo. This results in many adolescents feeling embarrassed or afraid to seek information or access the health services they need. Similar findings were also presented by Nuraisyah et al (2021), who showed that in environments with conservative social norms, adolescent girls often experience greater barriers than adolescent boys in accessing reproductive health services. This stigma comes not only from family and community, but also from health workers themselves, who sometimes have moral bias in providing services to adolescents seeking access to contraception or sexual education.

In addition to social and cultural barriers, accessibility constraints in remote areas also worsen the condition of reproductive health services for adolescents. A study by Wulandari & Laksono (2020) found that adolescents living in rural areas were less likely to access reproductive health services compared to those living in urban areas. The main factors causing this gap include a lack of health workers, limited medical facilities, and economic and geographical constraints. In the Indonesian context, a study conducted by Coombs et al (2022) showed that

only 40% of health facilities in rural areas have reproductive health services specifically for adolescents, further emphasizing the inequality of access.

To address these challenges, a more inclusive and evidence-based strategy is needed. One step that can be taken is to improve the competence of midwives through ongoing training based on psychosocial approaches and effective communication. Research by Enggarati et al (2024) shows that special training for health workers in dealing with adolescents can improve the quality of services and encourage adolescents to be open to seeking help. In addition, creating more adolescent-friendly health services is an urgency in itself. This can be realized by providing more private consultation rooms, building more empathetic relationships between midwives and adolescents, and eliminating stigma in services.

In addition to the approach in health facilities, collaboration between midwives, schools and communities is also a strategic step in increasing awareness and reducing stigma towards adolescent reproductive health services. A study conducted by Berglas et al. (2024) showed that integrating reproductive health education into the school curriculum can increase adolescents' understanding of their sexual health, while encouraging them to access available services. In the community context, collaboration with community leaders and youth organizations can be an effective tool in changing public perceptions about the importance of inclusive reproductive health services for adolescents.

Furthermore, the use of digital technology is an increasingly relevant solution in increasing access to adolescent reproductive health services. Research by Sulistyawati (2023) shows that the use of teleconsultation and digital-based health applications can increase adolescent involvement in obtaining accurate and reliable health information. In several countries, health applications that provide sexual education services and consultations with medical personnel have been shown to increase adolescent awareness of their reproductive health without fear of social stigma. Implementing a similar approach in Indonesia can be a progressive step in reaching adolescents, especially in areas with limited health facilities.

By implementing these strategies, it is hoped that barriers to accessing reproductive health services for adolescents can be significantly minimized. Strengthening training for midwives, creating more youth-friendly services, collaborating with schools and communities, and utilizing digital technology are evidence-based steps that can improve the quality of services and reduce the gap in access that has occurred so far. If these strategies are implemented consistently and supported by adequate policies, reproductive health services for adolescents will not only be more inclusive, but also more effective in responding to their needs holistically.

Integration of Digital Technology in Reproductive Health Education

1. Utilization of Digital Platforms in Reproductive Health Education

The use of digital platforms in reproductive health education has become a growing phenomenon, along with the increasing use of technology among adolescents. Digital technology offers faster, more flexible, and anonymous access to information, which is a key factor in overcoming the social stigma related to discussions about reproductive health. According to research by Sari et al (2020), the use of social media as a means of reproductive health education can increase adolescent involvement in more open health discussions, especially through video-based content, infographics, and interactive forums. This finding is in line with a study conducted by Darozatulloh & Tutiasri (2025), which shows that social media can be an effective tool in increasing health awareness among adolescents, especially on sensitive issues that are often avoided in conventional social environments.

Furthermore, artificial intelligence (AI)-based health applications have brought significant changes in the delivery of accurate and evidence-based information. AI-based chatbots have been shown to provide emotional support and credible health information to adolescents, without them having to fear being judged. This is also supported by research conducted by Anwar & Anisdiasarathi (2025), which found that chatbots in digital health services can increase user engagement and improve health literacy through responsive and personalized interactions. In addition, teleconsultation services with professional health workers have also shown effectiveness in increasing adolescent access to more reliable information. A study by Solihin et al (2023) confirmed that telemedicine services can reduce geographic and social barriers in obtaining education and reproductive health services, especially for groups vulnerable to social stigma.

In the context of reproductive health literacy and prevention of unplanned pregnancy, research conducted by Kohler et al. (2008) showed that evidence-based reproductive health education has a positive correlation with increased understanding of contraceptive methods and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. The implications of this study confirm that digital platforms designed with an evidence-based approach and oriented to the needs of adolescents have great potential in increasing understanding and changing healthier behaviors. In addition, research conducted by Hollis et al. (2015) highlighted that digital interventions in health education can have a long-term impact in shaping more proactive behaviors towards reproductive health.

However, the main challenge in utilizing digital platforms for reproductive health education lies in the accuracy of the information and supervision of the content being disseminated. Research conducted by Sabilah et al (2024) revealed that not all health information available on social media is reliable, because there is a lot of misinformation circulating without validation from medical personnel. Therefore, the development of digital platforms must consider information

verification mechanisms and the involvement of health workers in compiling scientifically based content.

Overall, the use of digital technology in reproductive health education is an effective strategy, but requires a more structured and evidence-based approach. With the right integration between social media, AI-based applications, and telemedicine services, digital platforms can become tools that not only provide accurate information but are also able to create healthier behavioral changes among adolescents. Therefore, further research is needed to explore the long-term effectiveness of various digital education methods and their impact on reproductive health behaviors in the future.

2. Regulatory Challenges and Information Validity in Digital Education

The dissemination of reproductive health information through digital platforms provides a great opportunity to reach adolescents widely. However, the main challenge that arises is the lack of validation of the content in circulation. Much of the information spread on the internet does not go through a strict verification process, which can lead to misunderstandings in decision-making related to reproductive health. A WHO study (2023) showed that inaccurate content regarding contraception, pregnancy, and sexual health on social media has the potential to increase the risk of unplanned pregnancy and unsafe reproductive health practices. The results of a study conducted by Reinanda et al (2024) confirmed that misinformation about sexual health that is widely spread on social media, especially among adolescents, can influence their attitudes and behavior in making decisions related to reproductive health. In addition, a study conducted by Taba et al (2022) revealed that low digital literacy among adolescents makes them more easily influenced by invalid information, thereby increasing the risk of high-risk behavior.

The lack of supervision of content circulating on social media further exacerbates this condition. A study conducted by Krisna et al (2025) shows that regulations related to the dissemination of health information in the digital world are still weak, especially in controlling platforms that are widely used by the younger generation. Social media algorithms tend to promote content that attracts attention and goes viral, rather than content that has a strong scientific basis. This reinforces the finding that adolescents are more often exposed to information that is not based on scientific evidence, thereby increasing misunderstandings about reproductive health. Furthermore, research conducted by Indiahono et al (2021) in the field of eHealth suggests that although digital technology can be an effective tool in health education, without strict regulation, this platform can actually be a source of dangerous disinformation for the public, especially for the adolescent age group who have limitations in evaluating the credibility of information.

To address this issue, a multidisciplinary approach involving health workers, academics, and policy regulators is needed to ensure that digital education on reproductive health remains evidence-based. Collaboration

between the government, academics, and digital platforms in formulating policies and verifying content can improve the quality of available information. In addition, research conducted by Puspitasari et al (2019) emphasized that the involvement of health workers in the process of producing and distributing reproductive health information can increase public trust in valid sources of information. In this context, health workers such as doctors and midwives need to play an active role in disseminating verified information, while academics can contribute through research and development of educational materials that are appropriate to the needs of adolescents.

In addition, regulations on digital platforms need to be tightened to ensure that only evidence-based information is accessible to adolescents. Regulations that require verification of health information before publication can significantly reduce the spread of misinformation. In addition, research conducted by Arraafi & Zulhazmi (2022) found that the use of warning labels or content verification on health information on social media can increase user awareness in sorting valid sources of information. Therefore, the government and regulators must encourage digital platforms to adopt similar mechanisms to ensure that the reproductive health information available is reliable and not misleading.

In addition to regulations, increasing digital literacy among adolescents is also a strategic step in facing the challenges of information validity. Structured and evidence-based digital literacy programs can improve adolescents' ability to evaluate the credibility of information sources. This is reinforced by the findings of Sahputra et al (2023) which show that individuals with good digital literacy are better able to distinguish between valid information and hoaxes in the digital world. Therefore, educational campaigns that focus on strengthening digital literacy need to be strengthened, both through educational institutions and health organizations, so that adolescents have better skills in filtering the information they consume.

In addition, the development of evidence-based digital education platforms supported by health institutions and academics can be an alternative solution in providing credible sources of information for adolescents. Digital platforms designed with an evidence-based approach and supported by medical personnel and academics can increase the effectiveness of health education. Adolescents are more interested in accessing health information through interactive digital platforms that present information visually and easily understood. Therefore, the development of digital education platforms must pay attention to attractive and easily accessible design aspects to be more effective in conveying educational messages to the younger generation.

Overall, although digital technology has great potential in supporting reproductive health education, the main challenges related to the validity of information and content regulation are still obstacles that need serious attention. Various previous studies have shown that the spread of inaccurate information about reproductive health can have a significant impact on adolescent behavior. Therefore, cross-sector collaboration between health workers, academics, and policy regulators is the main key in ensuring that the information available on

digital platforms is accurate, reliable, and in accordance with health standards. In addition, efforts to increase adolescent digital literacy are also a strategic step in reducing the negative impact of the spread of misinformation, so that reproductive health education can run more effectively and provide optimal benefits for the younger generation..

CONCLUSIONS

The role of midwives is crucial in adolescent reproductive health education to raise awareness and prevent unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. Science-based education has been proven to be more effective than moralistic approaches in improving adolescents' understanding of reproductive health. However, there are still obstacles in implementing this education, such as cultural resistance, social stigma, and limited access to accurate information. In addition, midwives face challenges in adolescent reproductive health services, including lack of special training and disparities in health facilities in remote areas. To overcome this, it is necessary to improve the competence of midwives, adolescent-friendly health services, and collaboration with schools and communities to eliminate the stigma related to reproductive health. Digital technology is an innovative solution that can increase access to reproductive health information through teleconsultation, social media, and artificial intelligence (AI)-based applications. Although technology provides benefits, the main challenges in the form of misinformation and weak regulations are still obstacles to digital reproductive health education. Therefore, a strict monitoring mechanism and increased digital literacy are needed so that adolescents can sort out valid information and avoid hoaxes. Collaboration between health workers, academics, government, and digital platform providers is the key to the success of effective and evidence-based reproductive health education. With the right strategy, it is hoped that teenagers can obtain accurate information, increase awareness of reproductive health, and make wiser decisions regarding their sexual health.

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