

Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Sexuality Volunteer Cadre Training in Junior High School in Tombolo Pao, Gowa

Berlian*¹, Irma Susan Paramita², Syukfitrianti Syahrir³, Tri Addya Karini⁴

^{1,3,4}Department of Public Health, Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin, Makassar, Indonesia

²Department of Nutrition, Politeknik Kesehatan Kemenkes Riau, Pekanbaru, Indonesia

Correspondence: berliansubhan@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia is still a country with a large number of early marriage cases. The high number of cases shows that sexual education in preventing early marriage and improving adolescent reproductive health needs to be implemented. The training of volunteer sexuality cadres at SMPN 2 Tombolo Pao aims to increase students' knowledge and awareness of reproductive health and the dangers of early marriage. This program evaluation uses quantitative evaluation methods through pre and post-tests, observations, and interviews. The results of the analysis showed a significant increase in the knowledge of the cadres after the training. Interviews with the cadres indicated that this activity went well and that the cadres were able to educate their peers about the dangers of early marriage. However, the formation of an official cadre structure did not take place due to the constraints of preparing for exams and scout competitions. Observations showed that the physical intervention of installing posters at two strategic points was hampered by school renovations, so the posters were temporarily removed and will be reinstalled after the renovations are completed. The findings suggest that the sexuality volunteer cadre training is effective in increasing knowledge and information dissemination among students, although improvements are needed in the structural implementation and placement of educational materials in the school environment.

Keywords: marriage; program evaluation; reproductive health; sexuality; students

ABSTRAK

Indonesia masih menjadi negara dengan angka kasus pernikahan dini yang besar. Tingginya kasus tersebut menunjukkan pendidikan seksual dalam mencegah pernikahan dini dan meningkatkan kesehatan reproduksi remaja perlu dilaksanakan. Pelatihan kader relawan seksualitas di sekolah menengah pertama bertujuan untuk meningkatkan pengetahuan dan kesadaran siswa mengenai kesehatan reproduksi dan bahaya pernikahan dini. Evaluasi program ini menggunakan metode penilaian kuantitatif melalui pre dan post-test, observasi, serta wawancara. Hasil analisis menunjukkan peningkatan signifikan dalam pengetahuan kader setelah pelatihan. Wawancara dengan para kader mengindikasikan bahwa kegiatan ini berjalan dengan baik, di mana para kader mampu memberikan pemahaman kepada teman sebayanya tentang bahaya pernikahan dini. Namun, pembentukan struktur resmi kader belum dilakukan karena kendala persiapan ujian dan lomba pramuka. Observasi menunjukkan bahwa intervensi fisik berupa pemasangan poster di dua titik strategis terhambat oleh renovasi sekolah, sehingga poster sementara dilepas dan akan dipasang kembali setelah renovasi selesai. Temuan ini mengimplikasikan bahwa pelatihan kader relawan seksualitas efektif dalam meningkatkan pengetahuan dan penyebaran informasi di kalangan siswa, meskipun perlu perbaikan dalam implementasi struktural dan penempatan materi edukatif di lingkungan sekolah.

Kata Kunci: pernikahan; evaluasi program; kesehatan reproduksi; seksualitas; siswa

INTRODUCTION

Early marriage is a global problem that has a serious impact on adolescent health, education and well-being (Torabi, 2023). According to UNICEF data (2023), approximately 12 million girls worldwide are married before the age of 18 each year (UNICEF, WHO, 2024). In Indonesia, the rate of early marriage is still high despite various efforts to reduce it. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2023 showed that 11.2% of women aged 20-24 were married before the age of 18 (BPS Sulsel, 2024). In South Sulawesi Province, early marriage is also a major concern, with significant incidence rates in various districts, including Gowa Regency. In Tombolo Pao sub-district, the most recent data from the Gowa District Health Office (2023) showed that 15% of adolescent girls were married before the age of 18, indicating the need for more effective interventions to address this issue (Rumble et al., 2018). The lack of sexual education in schools exacerbates this situation, as adolescents do not get enough information about reproductive health and the dangers of early marriage (Likupe et al., 2020).

Many studies emphasize the importance of sexual education in preventing early marriage and improving adolescent reproductive health (Setiawati et al., 2022), (Ibnu et al., 2022). However, there are still gaps in evaluating the effectiveness of these programs (Ivanova et al., 2020; Saran et al., 2020). Most programs stop at the implementation stage without a comprehensive assessment of the improvement in students' knowledge, attitudes and behaviors (Kristjansdottir et al., 2021), (Jauhari et al., 2023). This suggests the need for more in-depth evaluations to assess the long-term impact and effectiveness of the sexuality volunteer cadre training (Lameiras-Fernández et al., 2021). Studies have emphasized the significant impact of education on the timing of marriage, with more educated individuals, especially women, being less likely to engage in early marriage (Getnet et al., 2019). This highlights the importance of promoting girls' education as a key strategy in reducing early marriage rates (Raj et al., 2019). Educational and occupational expectations have been found to influence the timing of first sex and marriage, as youth who prioritize their career goals are less likely to opt for early marriage (Lindstrom et al., 2022).

The sexuality volunteer cadre training program at Junior High School (SMPN) 2 Tombolo Pao is designed to address this issue. Through the peer education approach, it is expected that students can more easily accept and understand the information conveyed, because it is delivered by their own peers. The program not only increases students' knowledge, but also involves them as active agents of change in disseminating information to their peers. In addition, the program includes the installation of educational posters at strategic points in the school to raise awareness about sexual and reproductive health.

The methods used include quantitative assessment (pre and post-test), observation, and interviews to measure the improvement of students' knowledge, attitude, and behavior after the training. This evaluation also aims to identify obstacles faced during the implementation of the program as well as provide recommendations for improvement and development of the program in the future. It is expected that this evaluation will provide a clear picture of the program's success in preventing early marriage and improving reproductive health among adolescents. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the effectiveness of the sexuality volunteer cadre training program at SMPN 2 Tombolo Pao.

METHODS

Analysing the effectiveness or success of this program, we used a comprehensive evaluation method, combining quantitative and qualitative assessments. This method is based on Levey and Loomba's evaluation theory, which ensures scientific rigor and accountability. The method we used included several main steps: quantitative assessment (second post-test), observation, as well as in-depth individual interviews integrated with the ABCD (Asset Based Community Development) empowerment method.

First, we conducted a quantitative assessment through a second post-test to measure changes in participants' knowledge and skills after 8 months of the program. The first post-test was conducted immediately after the intervention was completed, while the second post-test was conducted to assess the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of the program. The results of this second post-test were compared with the results of the first post-test to determine the level of retention of participants' knowledge and skills.

Second, observations were conducted during the implementation of the program in the classroom of SMPN 2 Tombolo Pao on May 25, 2024. The purpose of this observation was to see firsthand how the program was implemented and how participants responded to the program. And whether the physical intervention in the form of posters on the dangers of early marriage that we put up are still there and useful or not.

Third, we conducted in-depth interviews with program staff and targets, including school teachers. These interviews aimed to gain a more in-depth perspective on the effectiveness of the program, challenges faced during implementation, and suggestions for future improvements. These interviews were conducted in the classrooms of SMPN 2 Tombolo Pao on the same date.

By using this comprehensive evaluation method, we not only measure the end results of the program, but also assess the implementation process. This allows us to provide more informed recommendations for future program improvements, based on accurate data and in-depth perspectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The evaluation was conducted on May 25, 2024 in the classroom of SMP Negeri 2 Tombolo Pao with 15 cadres of sexuality volunteers. The evaluation process begins with conducting a post test to 15 cadres, then interviews with cadres and one of the teachers and ends with observations about physical interventions in the form of posters. Evaluation of this counseling is done in a quantitative way, namely by using the same questionnaire as 8 months ago by measuring the knowledge of respondents. The results of the questionnaire can be seen in the following table.

Table 1 shows an increase in knowledge 8 months after counseling and training of sexuality volunteer cadres was conducted, with an average of 62.67 (pre test) to an average of 70.67 (post test I) and the final average conducted to 83.33 (Post test II).

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents Based on Knowledge Level

Skor Pengetahuan	n	Min.	Maks.	Mean±SD
Pretest	15	30	90	62.67±19.445
Post test I	15	30	100	70.67±19.445
Post test II	15	60	100	83.33±13.452

Table 2. Statistical Test Results on Volunteer Sexuality Cadres

Pengetahuan	Pre-Test		Post-Test I		Post-test II	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Kurang	8	53.3	7	46.7	7	46.7
Cukup	7	46.7	8	53.3	8	53.3

Table 2 shows the level of knowledge of sexuality volunteers where sufficient knowledge at pre test was 46.7% (7 respondents), sufficient knowledge at post test I was 53.3% (8 respondents) and sufficient knowledge at post test II was 53.3% (8 respondents).

Based on the results of an interview with a cadre at SMP Negeri 2 Tombolo Pao, counseling activities regarding the dangers of early marriage have been going on for the past eight months. The cadres have successfully educated their peers in several classes, although the formation of an official structure of sexuality volunteer cadres has not been implemented due to the busyness of students, especially grade 9 who are facing exams and some other students who are involved in the preparation of scout competitions.

In addition, observations showed that the installation of posters in the school entrance corridor and in front of class 8b had a positive impact, although they were temporarily removed due to school renovations. A teacher revealed that these posters are very useful for students, teachers and guests who come to the school, as they effectively provide a new understanding of the topics raised. The posters will be reinstalled after the renovation is complete.

The post-2 quantitative assessment results showed a significant increase in the cadres' knowledge. This improvement is in line with other research findings showing that school-based education interventions can effectively improve adolescents' knowledge and awareness of reproductive health and sexuality (Kedzior et al., 2020) (Vincent & Krishnakumar, 2022).

In addition, the fact that the cadres were able to continue counseling other students despite the unofficial organizational structure shows their commitment and seriousness in carrying out their duties as agents of change. This supports previous research showing that trained cadres can be effective agents in disseminating health information in their communities (Schleiff et al., 2021; Djuari et al., 2023), although they face challenges in organization and time (Febriani et al., 2021; Tampake et al., 2021).

Figure 1. Interview and Evaluation Process of Volunteer Sexuality Cadre



Figure 1 shows the Interview process with cadres and teachers. This activity further confirms that the cadres have been carrying out their duties well, despite not yet putting together an official structure. Constraints such as exams and scout training that hinder the development of this structure need to be addressed in the planning of the next training program. This suggests the need for more flexibility and support in program implementation so that cadres can carry out their duties more optimally (Goode & Eakin, 2013; Windarwati et al., 2023). This finding is in line with community service results that emphasize the importance of adapting public health programs to students' schedules and activities to ensure maximum participation (Wehner et al., 2021; Reichel et al., 2021).

Observations of the use of information media such as posters of the dangers of early marriage in the corridor and in front of the classroom also showed positive results. These posters serve as effective visual aids, reminding the entire academic community and school guests of the importance of avoiding early marriage. This is in line with previous community service results which found that visual media can serve as important reminders and effective educational tools in the school environment (R.Ye et al., 2020; Katona et al., 2023). Although the posters are currently temporarily removed due to school renovations, their effectiveness as reminders has been recognized by teachers and school authorities.

Overall, this service showed that the training and counseling were effective in increasing the knowledge and awareness of the volunteer sexuality cadres. However, some aspects such as the preparation of an official structure and the continuity of using information media need to be improved. With proper support and careful planning, this program has great potential to provide a broader positive impact in improving reproductive health and sexuality among high school adolescents (Vincent & Krishnakumar, 2022). These results are in line with the literature suggesting that sustained and well-supported health education programs can result in significant positive behavior change among adolescents (Nagy-Pénzes et al., 2022; Yoon et al., 2021; Tejada-Gallardo et al., 2020). Sex education is a crucial tool in preventing early marriage by providing individuals, particularly adolescents, with the necessary knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health. Research has shown that early marriage can have detrimental effects, such as hindering educational opportunities, increasing maternal and child mortality rates, and leading to various health issues (Sariroh, 2024). By offering comprehensive sex education, individuals can better comprehend the consequences of early marriage and make choices that align with their long-term goals and well-being (Ririnisahawaitun, 2023).

Factors such as poverty, economic challenges, and cultural norms can contribute to early marriage (Aryati et al., 2020). However, education emerges as a critical factor in preventing early marriage, empowering individuals to delay marriage, prioritize education, and make informed decisions about their future (Otim, 2019). Government support in providing educational assistance and motivating children to maximize their education can significantly contribute to delaying early marriage (Ernawati et al., 2023).

In addition to education, addressing issues such as poverty, lack of resources for schooling, and cultural norms is essential in preventing early marriage (Kok et al., 2023). Efforts to prevent child marriage need to consider the realities faced by girls and their families, including economic constraints and social norms that may perpetuate early marriage practices (Kok et al., 2023). By empowering health cadres and implementing early marriage prevention strategies, communities can work towards reducing the prevalence of early marriage (Antarsih et al., 2023).

Furthermore, early marriage's impact extends beyond physical health to include mental well-being, access to education, and economic stability (Mujahidah, 2023). Early marriage can limit individuals' access to education and hinder their social and emotional development during adolescence, a crucial period for growth and self-discovery (Hartarto & Wibowo, 2022). By providing knowledge about the risks and consequences of early marriage, individuals can develop a better understanding of the implications of such decisions (Arikarani, 2024).

CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation after eight months showed the effectiveness of the program in increasing students' knowledge about sexuality, this was indicated by the increased knowledge score with an average knowledge score of 83.3, the continued implementation of the program with counseling conducted to other students as well as the benefits of posters posted, but continuous evaluation based on the latest theories and practices in sexual education is still needed to ensure the sustainability and suitability of the program to the needs of students and the school environment. Teachers are expected to continue to support and strengthen the sexual education program by updating extension materials based on the latest developments in sexual education. Integration of this topic into the regular curriculum can be done gradually to ensure students get a comprehensive understanding. In addition, parents are expected to support the sexual education provided at school by continuing the discussion at home. Providing an understanding that is aligned with what is taught at school will help children understand the importance of sexual and reproductive health.

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