

## Empowerment of students at SMP 1 Muhammadiyah Klaten as peer educators on reproductive health for adolescents

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### Abstract

Adolescence is a phase of life where individuals experience significant development, including sexual changes, during the ages of 13-15. Middle school students often hesitate to discuss reproductive health with their parents, preferring instead to share information with their peers. Peers, acting as peer educators, play a crucial role in influencing adolescents' attitudes, clothing styles, and social behavior. This community service aimed to provide information on reproductive health to students at SMP 1 Muhammadiyah Klaten to enhance their ability to spread this information to others. The methods used included the development of a pocketbook, coordination with the school, a pre-test, information delivery, a post-test, and understanding the role of a peer educator. The results showed improvements in knowledge and attitudes regarding reproductive health. In conclusion, providing information about adolescent reproductive health is effective in developing peer educators.

Keywords: Peer Educator, Adolescence, Reproductive Health

### Abstrak

Remaja mengalami perkembangan signifikan, termasuk perubahan seksual, selama fase usia 13-15 tahun. Siswa SMP sering kali enggan membahas kesehatan reproduksi dengan orang tua dan lebih memilih teman sebaya sebagai tempat berbagi informasi. Teman sebaya, sebagai peer educator, memainkan peran penting dalam memengaruhi sikap, gaya berpakaian, dan perilaku sosial remaja. Pengabdian ini bertujuan memberikan informasi tentang kesehatan reproduksi kepada siswa SMP 1 Muhammadiyah Klaten untuk meningkatkan kemampuan mereka menyebarkan informasi tersebut. Metode yang digunakan meliputi pengembangan media berupa buku saku, koordinasi dengan sekolah, pre-test, pemberian informasi, post-test, dan pemahaman peran sebagai peer educator. Hasilnya menunjukkan peningkatan pengetahuan dan sikap tentang kesehatan reproduksi. Kesimpulannya, pemberian informasi mengenai kesehatan reproduksi pada remaja efektif dalam membentuk peer educator.

Kata kunci: Pendidik Sebaya, Remaja, Kesehatan Reproduksi

How to cite: Syahputri, R. B., Prakosa, F. A., Purnamasari, S. A., & Maresta, A. S. (2024). Empowerment of students at SMP 1 Muhammadiyah Klaten as peer educators on reproductive health for adolescents. *Tintamas: Jurnal Pengabdian Indonesia Emas*, 1(3), 229–237. <https://doi.org/10.53088/tintamas.v1i3.1292>



## 1. Introduction

In this modern era, adolescents face various challenges related to reproductive health, including the high risk of engaging in risky behavior, easy access to inaccurate information through social media, and the rising prevalence of sexually transmitted infections among youth. However, some adolescents may encounter limited access to reproductive health information and services due to social norms or economic constraints, as seen in Klaten Regency (Sari et al., 2022). Reproductive health education interventions in schools can significantly improve adolescents' knowledge and attitudes about reproductive health (Widiyastuti & Hakiki, 2022). At SMP 1 Muhammadiyah Klaten, similar efforts are needed by providing comprehensive and easily understandable reproductive health education to students.

Empowering students as peer educators in adolescent reproductive health has proven to be effective in increasing knowledge and promoting positive attitudes among adolescents. Peer educators are trained peers who provide information and education about reproductive health to their friends. This approach leverages the closer relationships and communication among adolescents, making the information more easily received and understood. Peer education programs have successfully improved adolescents' knowledge and communication skills regarding reproductive health and reduced risky behavior (DiClemente et al., 2001). At SMP 1 Muhammadiyah Klaten, the implementation of a peer education program can be an effective strategy to address reproductive health issues by actively involving students in the educational process. Thus, SMP 1 Muhammadiyah Klaten can contribute significantly to fostering a healthy and empowered younger generation through appropriate reproductive health education.

Moreover, empowering students as peer educators can help address the various barriers often encountered in reproductive health education programs. Adolescents tend to feel more comfortable discussing reproductive health topics with their peers rather than with adults or healthcare professionals (Kim & Free, 2008). A peer education program at SMP 1 Muhammadiyah Klaten can reduce stigma and enhance the accessibility of reproductive health information. By involving students in the role of peer educators, schools can create an environment that supports open dialogue and continuous education on reproductive health, helping adolescents make better decisions and maintain their well-being.

Adolescents are typically categorized as those aged 12-18 years. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that 1.2 billion adolescents make up 16% of the global population, a number that is expected to rise as birth rates continue to increase. Therefore, adolescent health is a crucial aspect to be maintained. A psychological consortium found that in Indonesia, adolescents who date are at risk of engaging in risky sexual behaviors: 23% engage in sexual intercourse, 33% in petting, 77% in kissing, and 92% in holding hands (Hidayangsih, 2014).

The problem arises because adolescents or students still lack knowledge about their reproductive health, have limited exposure to maintaining reproductive health, and

often learn about deviations primarily from social media (Yarza et al., 2019). Much of the information available on social media and other sources related to adolescent reproductive health is rarely accessed, and the information that is more easily available is often inaccurate. In contrast, accurate information is difficult to access, especially for adolescents. Adolescents today also tend to experiment with new things out of curiosity. Without a peer to guide them, they can become confused, which may lead to delinquency.

For some adolescents, experiences of rejection or neglect can lead to feelings of loneliness, making it necessary for them to develop new social adjustment skills that can serve as a foundation for broader social interactions (Widiarta et al., 2023). Ironically, the high-risk factors for adolescent reproductive health issues are not matched by easy access to youth health services. Even schools, which are sources of knowledge, have not been able to facilitate the easy transfer of this important information (Isnii et al., 2020). Adolescents' knowledge about reproductive health and ways to protect themselves from health risks remains very low and is a concern for all of us. Their understanding of reproductive health is still limited, leaving them highly vulnerable and at risk. Parents are considered the best source of information that can influence adolescents' knowledge (Ernawati, 2018). However, discussions about reproductive health between parents and children are often considered taboo and are rarely conducted. Adolescents tend to feel more comfortable sharing sensitive matters with their peers, who they perceive as going through similar phases.

Peers provide a social space that is deemed most suitable for adolescents. This is because they share the same experiences and changes, and one of the reasons adolescents seek peer interaction is to form their identity. Peer acceptance becomes highly important to adolescents, prompting them to behave, dress, and act socially in ways that align with their peer group. Therefore, it is crucial to choose positive peer relationships (Mustofa et al., 2020).

## 2. Community development method

The community service method is divided into several stages. The stages of the service are illustrated in Figure 1.

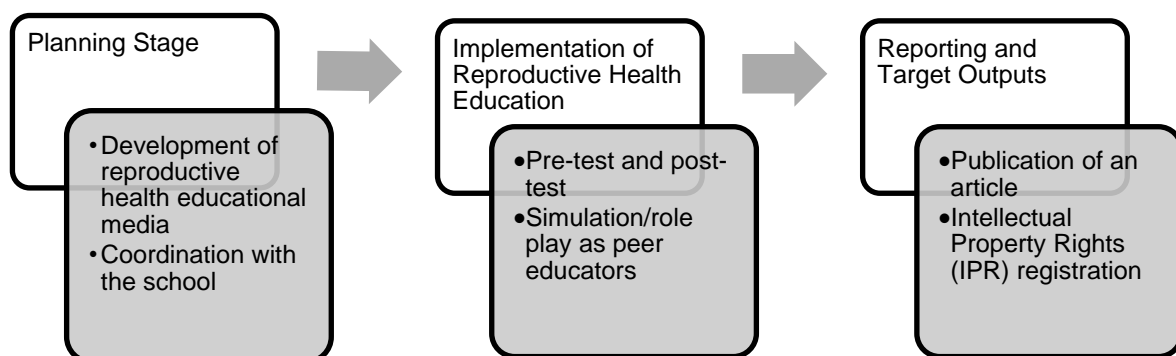


Figure 1. Flowchart of the Stages of Community Service

The flowchart above shows the steps of the Community Service program. The planning phase, which entails coordinating with SMP 1 Muhammadiyah Klaten to define the implementation timeline, comes first. The service team also creates teaching materials using PowerPoint, a pocketbook, and assessment tools for the activities, like a Google Forms-distributed questionnaire, during the preparation stage. The next step is implementation, in which the team delivers the content and has conversations with the SMP 1 Muhammadiyah Klaten students after distributing a pre-test questionnaire. Students from SMP 1 Muhammadiyah Klaten's Student Council (OSIS) and Youth Red Cross (PMR) are taking part in the program.

Following the presentation of the content, students are required to act as peer educators in a simulation. In the simulation, the service crew awards door prizes to students who do well. Following the simulation, participants are sent a link to a Google Form to complete a post-test. The pre-test and post-test questions evaluate attitudes and knowledge on the reproductive health of adolescents. The results of the pre-test and post-test questionnaires are compiled by the service team for data analysis and the production of the final report when the service agenda is finished. A scientific article that will be published in a recognized community service journal is drafted using the final report as a guide. Additionally, the lead of the service project will manage the Intellectual Property Rights registration for the media developed in this project, specifically the pocketbook titled "Adolescent Reproductive Health."

### 3. Results community development

The community service activity was conducted on Thursday, February 29, 2024, in classroom 9B. The event was attended by 26 students, consisting of student council (OSIS) members and Youth Red Cross (PMR) participants from 7th and 8th grade. At the start of the activity, the service team distributed the pre-test via a Google Form link to all participants. The presenter used PowerPoint and a pocketbook titled Adolescent Reproductive Health as educational media.



Figure 2. Front and Back Cover of the Pocketbook

The front and back covers of the pocketbook are shown in Figure 2, and the title slide of the PowerPoint presentation is shown in Figure 3. The media was designed to be as engaging as possible, highlighting illustrations that attract students' attention and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the material.



Figure 3. Title Slide of the PowerPoint Presentation

The pocketbook created consists of 56 pages with A6 paper size (10.5 x 14.8 cm). The pocketbook was printed and distributed to the participants of the community service activity (PkM). Based on the service activity, data was collected regarding the characteristics of the students who participated in the PkM, which can be displayed in Table 1. include gender and age of the students.

Tabel 1. Characteristics of Students at SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Klaten

Characteristics	Frequency	
	n	%
Gender		
Male	2	7,7
Female	24	92,3
Age (years)		
12	3	11,5
13	13	50
14	10	38,5
Total	26	100

The characteristics of the participants in the community service activity show that the majority are female (92.3%), with half of the participants being 13 years old. The participants include 7th and 8th-grade students who are members of the student council (OSIS) at SMP 1 Muhammadiyah Klaten, along with several students who are involved in the Youth Red Cross (PMR). The participants were randomly selected by Mr. Deni Setiawan, M.Pd, who is responsible for student affairs at SMP 1 Muhammadiyah Klaten. Table 4.2 explains the differences in knowledge and attitudes toward reproductive health among the students of SMP 1 Muhammadiyah Klaten.



Table 2. Differences in Knowledge and Attitudes Toward Reproductive Health Among Students of SMP 1 Muhammadiyah Klaten (n=26)

Variable	Mean	P-value
Knowledge		
<i>Pre-test</i>	51,54	0,022
<i>Post-test</i>	61,54	
Attitude		
<i>Pre-test</i>	35,04	0,000
<i>Post-test</i>	44,92	

Based on the measurements of the pre-test and post-test scores among the students, it was found that there are differences in the average scores for knowledge ( $p\text{-value} = 0.022$ ) and attitudes ( $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ) before and after providing information about reproductive health using the pocketbook media.

Empowering students as peer educators in reproductive health is an effective strategy for increasing knowledge and awareness of the importance of reproductive health among adolescents. Peer educators have the ability to reach and influence their peers more effectively than traditional educational methods conducted by healthcare professionals (Wulandari & Syarifah, 2019). This program is designed to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to become agents of change in their school environment.



Figure 4. Delivery of Reproductive Health Education

SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Klaten's peer educator program is being implemented by providing selected students with extensive training to become peer educators. Reproductive health resources, effective communication strategies, and peer education tactics are all covered in this course. In order to guarantee that peer educators have the correct information and sufficient abilities to communicate with their

peers, thorough training is essential (Chandra-Mouli et al., 2015). Peer educators themselves benefit from this empowerment initiative in addition to the students who are receiving knowledge on reproductive health. According to Setiawan's research, students who participate in peer education programs can improve their leadership, communication, and self-confidence. This implies that students' personal growth is positively impacted by the program in a wide sense (Mustofa et al., 2020).

Support from a range of stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and the entire school community, is crucial to the peer educator program's success. To provide an environment that is favorable for peer educators to carry out their responsibilities, support from the surrounding community is crucial. Consequently, the effectiveness of the program depends on cooperation between the community and the school (Machfudloh & Astuti, 2022). The program needs to be regularly evaluated and monitored in order to be sustainable. The empowerment program should place a strong emphasis on the value of evaluation in gauging its success and making the required adjustments. Therefore, the student empowerment program at SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Klaten as peer educators in reproductive health may be carried out successfully and offer the most possible advantages to all stakeholders.



Figure 5. Participants of the Community Service Program

The sustainability of the peer educator program is a crucial aspect that needs to be considered. Regular evaluation and monitoring should be conducted to ensure the long-term effectiveness of the program (Ratnawati et al., 2024). Establishing a mentoring system where senior peer educators can guide junior peer educators can help ensure the transfer of knowledge and skills across generations of students. Additionally, integrating the peer educator program into the school curriculum can be a strategy to ensure the program's sustainability. This aligns with UNESCO's recommendation to integrate comprehensive reproductive health education into formal education systems (UN Women, & UNICEF, 2018).

The role of peer educators in addressing stigma and myths surrounding reproductive health should not be underestimated. By becoming a trusted and easily accessible source of information, peer educators can help reduce misinformation that often circulates among adolescents. Peer education programs are effective in reducing stigma related to sexual and reproductive health among adolescents (Kim & Free, 2008). Therefore, the peer educator program at SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Klaten should

emphasize the importance of this role and equip peer educators with the skills to address myths and stigma they may encounter.

#### 4. Conclusion

The Community Service Activity was implemented through an information dissemination program using pocket books as the educational medium. This educational outreach employed effective counseling approaches and communication methods, such as rhetoric and lectures, along with group communication models. After students were provided with information about adolescent reproductive health, there was a notable increase in student knowledge following the intervention through pocket books and changes in students' attitudes regarding reproductive health. Statistical analysis showed significant differences in mean knowledge scores and attitude scores between pre and post-intervention measurements using pocket book media for reproductive health education.

The sustainability of this community service program is maintained through the establishment of peer educators, which serves as one of the preventive measures against Unwanted Pregnancy (KTD), Sexually Transmitted Diseases including HIV/AIDS among students, particularly adolescents, through peer education roles. The effort to provide reproductive health information to adolescents is expected to continue intensively with comprehensive information covering various topics: Understanding reproductive health, The importance of maintaining reproductive health, Reproductive organ care, Male and female reproductive organs, Puberty, HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention, and Sexual violence.

#### Acknowledgements

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat of Universitas Muhammadiyah Klaten for providing the funding for this Community Service Activity, which has enabled us to produce this community service article as an output.

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